THE *Laodicean Age:*

Or, An Attempt to prove,

That CHRIST's Seven Epiſtles to the Seven Churches in *Aſia*, are to be underſtood, not in a *Literal* and *Hiſtorical*, but in a *Myſtical* and *Prophetical* Senſe; and, That the *Laſt* plainly points at the *Preſent Times.*

To which are added, ſome ſeaſonable Hints concerning the

MAN OF SIN.

OR, THE

Perſonal ANTICHRIST.

By *SAMUEL JOHNSON*, A.M.
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Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his Secret unto his Servants the Prophets. The Lyon hath rored, who will not fear? The Lord God hath ſpoken, who can but propheſy? Amos iii. 7, 8.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE PREFACE.

THE *Agents and Emiſſaries of the Powers of Darkneſs were never ſo bold and buſy, as they are at this Time, to decry* all *Revelation in general, and the* Book *of* Revelation *in particular; which they have lately attacked with uncommon Spite and Virulence. But there is ſomething at the Bottom of this, which they themſelves are not aware of. He that ſet them to Work has*

an End to ſerve by it, out of the Reach of their CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS. *He knows full well that the Prophecies contain'd in this Book are juſt ripe for Accompliſhment, yea, that ſome of them are now actually fulfilling. He knows that his Day is coming, that his ſhort, but moſt triumphant Reign upon Earth, is haſtening on apace; that* ANTICHRIST *properly and emphatically ſo call'd, who is ſo particularly deſcrib'd and againſt whom ſuch particular Caution is given in the* Revelation, *will ſoon make his Appearance upon the Stage of the World. No wonder then, that he employs his learned Tools, and uſes his utmoſt Efforts at this Juncture to cry down the* Revelation, *to leſſen its Eſteem among Chriſtians, to invalidate its divine Authority, and expoſe it to Scorn and Con-*

tempt; and thereby, if poſſible, to prevent Men from looking into a Book, which of All Books in the World they are now moſt concern'd to know and conſider. *But what particular Advantage the Patrons and Promoters of Hereſy and Infidelity can promiſe to themſelves and their Cauſe by proving the* Revelation *to be Doubtful or Uncanonical, is not ſo eaſy to diſcern: It conſiſts of Myſteries which they profeſs not to underſtand, of Obſcurities which they explode, of Predictions which they would ſeem to deſpiſe, of Doctrines which they pretend to diſregard. And will Men of Parts and Learning,* of their own free Motion, *exerciſe their Wit, waſte their Time, and employ their whole Strength, to confute a Writing that is, by their own Confeſſion, ſo far beneath their Notice*

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and Regard? No; *'Tis* the Spirit that worketh in the Children of *Unbelief and* Diſobedience *that has prompted theſe Men to examine with critical Spite and Torture the Authority of this Book in particular, and to treat it with ſolemn Banter and profane Sneer. But let them Sneer on: The Event will ſoon prove its Authority; the Accompliſhment will proclaim its Divinity.*

No Book in the Jewiſh *Canon was of leſs Eſteem than the Prophecy of* Daniel; *and yet no Prophecy was ever more exactly and punctually fulfill'd; and accordingly has been held in high Veneration ever ſince. 'Tis the ſame with the* Revelation *of St.* John: *It has been ſlighted by the Generality, becauſe not underſtood; and nothing has contributed*

contributed more to its Diſeſteem, than the many various, inconſiſtent, and contradictory Interpretations that have been given of it by Expoſitors, according to their different Schemes and Attachments in Religion or Policy. For whatever of this Kind has yet been offer'd to the World, ſeems either too much labour'd in the Expoſition, or too much ſtrain'd and limited in the Application, or calculated only to ſerve an Hypotheſis or a Party. Nor is there any One Modern *Interpretation, but what may juſtly be call'd a* private Interpretation, *which, as the Scripture plainly intimates, cannot be the* True One.

Wherefore avoiding thoſe Rocks which ſo many Others have ſplit upon, and following the only ſure Guide *which they have All left behind*

bind them, I mean, Chriſt's Epiſtles to the Seven Churches, *I ſhall endeavour, by the divine Aſſiſtance, to open the way to a clearer Knowledge and fuller Diſcovery of the many wonderful Things contain'd in this Book of* Revelation, *by proving both from external and internal Evidence, that theſe Epiſtles of* Chriſt *are in reality,* ſtrictly Prophetical, *and that the Prophecies implied therein reach to the preſent Age, and muſt have their full Accompliſhment, before the following Parts of the* Revelation *come to be fulfill'd.*

All Expoſitors hitherto have conſider'd the Revelation as fulfill'd in a great Meaſure already; *whereas poſſibly it may appear hereafter that* not ten Lines of direct Prophecy *have yet receiv'd their full and final Accompliſhment. The Time,*

I am perſuaded, is now come for a gradual and ſucceſſive Completion of the Whole. And when I ſee a General War carried on *between the Chriſtian or* European *Powers, I may then not without Reaſon conclude, that the* Firſt Seal *(which may juſtly be reckon'd the* Key *of the* Revelation, *though never yet made uſe of as ſuch for unlocking theſe hidden Myſteries) is* open'd *and paſs'd, and that other Signs and Wonders will ſoon follow. And then will this* glorious Light *that has for ſo many hundred Years* ſhined *only in a* dark Place, *appear like the* Day-ſtar *or Dawning of the Day, and point out to the Religious-Wiſe the near Approach of* Chriſt's Second Coming, *as evidently and conſpicuouſly as the Appearance of the* Star *to the* Eaſtern Magi *did his Nativity or* firſt *Advent.*

vent. And then too may we ſay of the Revelation *of St.* John, *as is ſaid of the* Goſpel *by St.* Paul — If *this Prophecy* be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, leaſt the Light of *this illuſtrious Prophecy, when view'd in the Accompliſhment*, ſhould ſhine unto them.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THere are four Things, as I conceive, previouſly neceſſary to be obſerv'd, in relation to Prophecy in General, and to this moſt eminent Prophecy in Particular. 1. That the ſame Spirit which gave the Prophecy muſt give the Interpretation of it. For as *Prophecy came not in old Time by the Will of Man*; *ſo no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως, i. e. of a Man's own Interpretation, but muſt be interpreted by the Holy Ghoſt, who alone can point out and diſcover the correſpondent Event, which he ſeldom does before the Prophecy begins to be fulfilled, or before it be drawing near

to an Accompliſhment: So that both Prophecy and the Interpretation of Prophecy is the peculiar Gift of the Holy Spirit. *Legendi quidem Prophetæ, ſed ita ut a Deo petatur Interpretationis Donum, ut idem ſit propheticorum Scriptorum autor & interpres.* Accordingly we do not find any one Prophet or Interpreter of Prophecies in the Old or New Teſtament, but was immediately inſpired. The Caſe of *Joſeph* and *Daniel* is remarkable to this Purpoſe; for they both aſcribe their Power of interpreting Dreams and Viſions wholly to *divine Inſpiration.* Other Matters and Subjects of Scripture may be interpreted, and rightly, by learned Men, as hiſtorical Facts, moral Truths, and ſome Myſteries of Religion; but Learning alone will not ſuffice for this: There muſt be a higher and more eminent

nent Endowment to qualify a Man for the Interpretation of Prophecy. In the latter Days 'tis generally allow'd, ſome ſuch Prophets will ariſe; and this Time may now be near at hand, 2. I obſerve, That Prophecies are not to be treated or expounded as *Ænigma's* or *Parables*, wherein, if the main Drift and Deſign of the Propoſer be anſwer'd, it is ſufficient: But in *Prophecy* every Circumſtance and Expreſſion muſt particularly accord with the Thing prophecied of; ſince in this there is nothing ſuperfluous or redundant, nothing added in the Way of Ornament or Embelliſhment, not a Name but has a peculiar Import and Significancy, not a Word but carries in it ſome Note or Characteriſtick, whereby to diſtinguiſh the Event or Events pointed at from all other Events whatſoever.

whatſoever. 3. It is obſervable, That as *Daniel*'s Prophecy relates chiefly to *Chriſt*'s *Firſt Coming*; ſo St. *John*'s relates principally to his *Second*; that as the Former has an Eye all along to the State of the *Jews*, ſo the Latter conſiders moſtly the Condition of the *Gentiles*; that both however meet and terminate in the laſt great Period and Conſummation of all Things, and ſerve to confirm and illuſtrate each other. 4. It is to be Noted, that as ſeveral of the Prophecies in the Old Teſtament which were to have their full and ultimate Completion *only in Chriſt*, do yet bear a primary and partial Reſpect to Things and Perſons, not far diſtant from the Times of thoſe Prophecies; ſo the Prophecies contain'd in the *Revelation*, which look directly forward to the laſt State and Scene of Things in

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in this World, have been thought by moſt Men to have had a nearer View, and to include and import a great Number of *intermediate Events*, of which, tis readily confeſs'd, do bear ſome faint, low, and imperfect Shadow or Reſemblance of the *Truth* and *Subſtance*; but the grand Completion is yet to come. 'Tis this however that has tempted Expoſitors to look upon moſt of the Prophecies of this Book as actually and abſolutely fulfill'd already; though I believe, upon a cloſer Inquiry, it will be found that the very *firſt* expreſs Prophecy in the *Apocalypſe* is not yet *fully* accompliſh'd, or come to its *full* Period.

As I deſign to be very brief and conciſe, and to give only ſome general Hints in the following Eſſay (leaving a more explicite Account or Enumeration of Facts, till I ſee whether

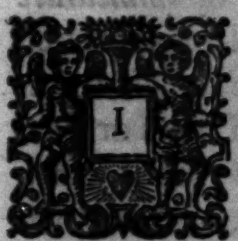
whether the Ground-work be rejected or approv'd) there will be no need at preſent of proving or explaining the foregoing Rules, which I have laid down chiefly for my own Uſe, in expounding this *Epiſtolary Prophecy of Chriſt*; which appears to me to be a curious, exact, and admirable Deſcription of the inward and outward State of the *Chriſtian Church* from the Apoſtles Days down to the preſent; and under an *hiſtorical Form*, to comprehend and convey to us a moſt remarkable Prediction of the ſeveral different Tempers or Conſtitutions of the Church of *Chriſt* for no leſs than ſeventeen Centuries ſucceſſively.

CHAP.

THE
Laodicean Age, &c.

CHAP. I.

Arguments to prove that Chriſt's *Epiſtles, to the Seven Churches are to be underſtood, not in an* Hiſtorical, *but* altogether Prophetical *Senſe.*



I Begin with thoſe Proofs or Arguments, which, for Diſtinction-ſake, I call *Negative* and *External.*

Firſt, Then I obſerve in General, that 'tis no juſt Objection to the Point I am maintaining, that theſe Epiſtles are penn'd in an *hiſtorical* way; ſince this is common to many other Prophecies in the Old Teſtament: Yea, the brighteſt and moſt expreſs and moſt particular Account we meet with in the Prophets, of the Perſon and Sufferings of the *Meſſiah,* is an *Hiſtorical Narration. Iſa.* liii. 2. I obſerve,

ſerve, that the *whole* Book of *Revelation* is denoted by *the Words of this Prophecy*, ch. i. v. 3. as if deſign'd on purpoſe to intimate that *theſe Epiſtles*, as well as any other Part, were *Prophetical*; and therefore in the very Beginning it is call'd *the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which God gave unto him to ſhew unto his Servants Things which muſt ſhortly come to paſs:* which laſt Words have by modern Expoſitors, been wholly applied to thoſe Prophecies which *follow* theſe Epiſtles, the Epiſtles themſelves having been paſs'd over, as Matter of mere Hiſtory; when as, in Truth, they are applicable to theſe in the firſt and ſtricteſt Senſe of the Words, and to the Other only in a remote and ſecondary Senſe. By *the Things which muſt ſhortly come to paſs*, is not to be underſtood a preſent or *immediate* Accompliſhment of all the Things ſpoken or prophecied of, but their *Succeſſive* Accompliſhment in their proper Times or Seaſons; ſome of which would ſoon commence, or *ſhortly come to paſs*, and all the reſt follow in a regular Courſe, every one in its own Order, without any intervening Delay, or Alteration of the Divine Purpoſe. Now, according to this Obſervation, the things contain'd in theſe Epiſtles (which muſt in Reaſon, be allow'd to be *Part* of the Prophecy of this Book, when the *Whole* is a Prophecy) though they were the Firſt Things that were to come to paſs, yet were they

they not to happen all at once, but to ſucceed One Another in an orderly Courſe of Time. 3. 'Tis farther obſervable, from the Account of the Churches theſe Epiſtles are directed to, that they are not to be taken *literally* and *hiſtorically*, but *myſtically* and *prophetically*. For St. *John* is ordered to write, not to *Seven* Churches, but to THE Seven Churches (which ſeems to imply and include the States and Characters of all the ſeveral Chriſtian Churches that ſhould be in the World.) Accordingly it is ſaid, *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*; not unto *this*, or *that*, or *theſe*, but to THE Churches in general. Again, ch. xxii. v. 16. *I Jeſus have ſent mine Angel to teſtify unto you theſe things in THE Churches: Theſe Things*, i. e. All the Things that had been mention'd before in this Book of *Revelation*; many of which, 'tis plain, are not to be accompliſh'd till near the End of the World: ſo that here *the Churches* evidently denote *All* the Churches ſucceſſively from the Beginning of Chriſtianity to the End of the World. And this is the more remarkable, becauſe the Angel does not mention *All* the Churches then in Being, no nor the *moſt famous* Churches then in the World, as ROME, ANTIOCK, ALEXANDRIA, and many others, and ſuch no doubt as had been Patterns of Inſtruction and Admonition, as well as thoſe

here named. And it is farther to be Noted, that as the Church of *Epheſus* continued to After-Ages, notwithſtanding the Threatning to remove her Candleſtick; ſo in St. *John*'s Time there was no Chriſtian Church at *Thyatira*; and therefore the Apoſtle muſt ſpeak of it not as one really exiſting, but by a prophetical Spirit and in a myſtical Senſe. To this I may add, that *Chriſt* repreſents himſelf to the Church in *Epheſus*, as *walking in the midſt of the ſeven golden Candleſticks*, that is, of the Seven Churches; which may be beſt interpreted by that other Promiſe of his to the Apoſtles; *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World.* For it would be too partial and reſtrain'd a Senſe put upon this Paſſage, to ſuppoſe that our Saviour's Preſence was to be confin'd to *ſeven particular Churches in Aſia*, and not to be extended to *all* the Churches that ſhould be in the World. And therefore from this mention of his *walking in the midſt of the ſeven golden Candleſticks*, we can reaſonably infer no leſs than that he plainly intended we ſhould underſtand him as ſpeaking not of thoſe particular Churches only, but of all the Churches in general. 4. I can't but obſerve, that if theſe Epiſtles were *purely Hiſtorical*, and order'd to be ſent or deliver'd to the ſeveral Churches mention'd, we might hope to meet with ſome Records or Notices, that they were ſo delivered or ſent by St.

John

John to the reſpective Churches; but ſo far from this, that at the Firſt Council held at *Laodicea*, no Traces or Footſteps cou'd be found of any ſuch Epiſtle deliver'd to that Church: And therefore this *Firſt Laodicean Council* rejected the *Revelation*, as Uncanonical, as the *Laodicean Age* ſeems ready to do the ſame, and for no better Reaſon. But 5. That which may be thought ſufficient of itſelf to put this Matter beyond all reaſonable Doubt, is, that the Characters here given of Two of the Churches, viz. SARDIS and LAODICEA, are ſo very bad, as not to be any way applicable to the *Apoſtolick Age*; ſince the former is repreſented as almoſt univerſally corrupted, and to have only juſt Faith enough to keep her alive; and the other to be without Faith and Works too, and at the ſame time to be ſo ſtrangely ignorant of her own wretched Condition, as to fancy herſelf abounding in all ſpritual Riches, when ſhe was Nothing but Poverty and Nakedneſs. Now theſe are Characters that no way ſuits with thoſe *Primitive Times*, when there were ſo many burning and ſhining Lights in the Church, when the Love of Chriſtians towards *Chriſt* and one another, was lively, warm, and vigorous; when their Faith was able to remove Mountains, and, which is greater ſtill, to overcome the World, and made them more than Conquerors! when they were zealous of

good

good Works, and thirſted after Martyrdom, being ready not only to ſuffer Shame for the Name of *Chriſt*, but to lay down their Lives for his Sake, as Multitudes of them did in thoſe Days. 'Tis plain then to me, that hough the Churches here na med at *Epheſus*, *Smyrna*, *Pergamus*, and the reſt, might, all or moſt of them, be really exiſting in the Apoſtle's Time, yet that both their *Names* and *Characters* are wholly *typical* and *prophetical*, as being deſigned by the Holy Ghoſt, in this Book of Prophecy (which ſhould therefore direct and aſcertain their prophetical Meaning) to ſignify and repreſent *the Seven-fold State of Chriſt's Church militant here on Earth*. And as 'tis eaſy to prove, that ſix of theſe States are already paſt, we can't but conclude that the Seventh or laſt State, which is the *Laodicean*, is now commenced, if not far advanced. But this will be beſt learnt from a particular and diſtinct View of the Contents of the ſeveral Epiſtles; in which there are ſome Things common to All, and others peculiar to Each, and which contain the *poſitive Proofs* I come now to examine. Which are,

Secondly, The *internal* Marks and Characters, and their exact Correſpondency or Agreement with the *outward* Events, or the ſeveral States of the Chriſtian Church as deſcrib'd in Hiſtory: And theſe conſiſt of the following Particulars. 1. The myſtical or prophetical

prophetical Name of each Church; 2. The Introductory Part, or the ſeveral Titles of *Chriſt*; 3. The Commendation and Reproof, together or apart; 4. The Exhortation or Threatning; 5. The Promiſe of a peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Reward, ſuited to the State and Probation of each Church, as a Motive or Encouragement to Perſeverance or Repentance; 6. The Monitory Concluſion: All and Every of which Particulars do marvellouſly tend, both jointly and ſeverally, to point out the Meaning and illuſtrate the Deſign of the Prophetick Spirit in each Epiſtle, and to confirm the *Hypotheſis* I am defending.

To prevent Digreſſion and Repetition, as much as poſſible, I ſhall here throw together a few ſhort preliminary Remarks or *Poſtulata*, which it may be proper for the Reader to be appriz'd of beforehand, and to bear in his Mind as he goes along. 1. That the *State of Chriſtianity* in every Church is here denominated from the State that is then *moſt predominant* or prevailing, but not wholly excluſive of other ſtates, but theſe overlook'd and not mention'd by *Chriſt*. 2. That this State, Condition, or Temper of the Church is ſometimes more viſible and conſpicuous in *one* Place, or Country than *another*, and conſequently *there* we are to look for the whole Deſcription. 3. That the Period or Duration of each State is very different

rent, ſome being very long and ſome ſhort, and the reſt between both. 4. That one State does not always end, when another begins; for though the Beginning of each be diſtinct and ſucceſſive, in Order of Time, yet their End is not, but continues afterwards in the Effects, notwithſtanding the Beginning of the Reſt: So that 'tis ſomewhat difficult to ſettle and adjuſt the exact Periods and Commencements of every diſtinct Church, or State of Chriſtianity; eſpecially ſince ſome of the Middle States, as to their *predominant* Characters, are ſtill very prevailing in the World, and may continue ſo to the End of the *Laodicean Age*. The following Calculations however will, I truſt, be found pretty exact and well ſupported. 5. That theſe Epiſtles, tho' written only to particular Perſons, to the *Angels* or Biſhops of the Churches, muſt yet be ſuppoſed, by reaſonable Conſtruction, to be directed likewiſe to, or at leaſt to concern all the Members of the ſeveral Churches over which they preſided, but ſtill with an Eye more particularly to the Governing Part.

Theſe Things premiſed, we come now to conſider the literal Contents and prophetical Import of each Epiſtle. *What thou ſeeſt, write it in a Book, and ſend it unto the ſeven Churches which are in* Aſia, *unto* EPHESUS, *and unto* SMYRNA, *and unto* PERGAMUS, *and unto* THYATIRA, *and unto*

to SARDIS, *and unto* PHILADELPHIA, *and unto* LAODICEA. The mention of the Churches which are *in Aſia*, may be thought by ſome ſufficient to overthrow what I have advanced againſt underſtanding theſe Epiſtles in an *Hiſtorical* Senſe. But to this I anſwer, That as the *Name* of every Church ſeems deſign'd by our Saviour, to be peculiarly and emphatically expreſſive of its own proper and diſtinguiſhing State or Character (as ſhall be ſhewn under each) ſo That of *Aſia*, ſeems in this Place to have a *myſtical* Meaning, and to denote ſomething more than one *Third*, or Leſſer Part of the then known World, even the *whole* World in general; which, as the ſame St. *John* has obſerv'd elſewhere, *lies in Wickedneſs*, or in the Wicked One, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ; and therefore is well denoted or repreſented to Us by the Word ἀσία or ἄσιν, which ſignifies muddy or miry, corrupt, filthy, and polluted, as the World always is, being a Sink of Vice and Corruption, and over-ſpread with *Filthineſs and a Superfluity of Naughtineſs*, and as being likewiſe under the baneful Influence and Dominion of the Prince of Darkneſs, emphatically ſtyled in Scripture *the God of this World*, who, with his Legions of impure Spirits, is continually walking up and down in it, ſeeking whom he may defile and devour. The Church of *Chriſt* therefore, or the Seven Churches are very properly

ſaid to be (not *of*, but) *in Aſia*, that is, to have their Reſidence or Pilgrimage in, though they are forbid having any familiar Commerce or being much converſant with, this naſty evil World.

CHAP. II. *Ep.* I.

An Expoſition of Chriſt's *Epiſtle to the Church in* EPHESUS.

‡ *The Firſt Church, or the Epheſine State of Chriſtianity.*

REvel. ii. v. 1. *Unto the Angel of the Church in* ‡ EPHESUS, *write.*—— By the *Angels* of the ſeveral Churches, we are to underſtand the Biſhops and Paſtors; who are here called *Angels* in Alluſion. I conceive, to what we read in Scripture, particularly in the Prophet *Daniel*, of their being the more immediate Miniſters of God's Providence, of their Preſiding over Humane Affairs, and having peculiar Kingdoms allotted to them for their reſpective Provinces; for the Welfare and Proſperity of which, they are repreſented as having a very ſollicitous Concern. And by the *Church in* EPHESUS, we have, I think, abundantly ſufficient Grounds to underſtand the *pure Primitive Church*, plainly ſignified and ſet forth

† *Epheſus, what it ſignifies in this Place.*

forth by its *Name*, and Character. For † *Epheſus* properly denotes Love or Deſire, or an ardent and affectionate Deſire, which is a juſt and true Character, in ſhort, of the *Firſt Chriſtians*, who were ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed by their fervent Love to *Chriſt* and one another, that they drew the Obſervation of the Heathens upon them, who were wont to cry out with Admiration, *ſee, how theſe Chriſtians love one another!* The Blood of Chriſt was yet warm in their Breaſts, and the Spirit of Religion briſk and vigorous.

* *The Commencement and Duration of the Epheſine State.*

Now this * *Epheſine* State of Chriſtianity I ſuppoſe to have commenced at the Concluſion of the *Apoſtolick Age*, or immediately after the Death of the laſt and longeſt Liver of the Apoſtles, St. *John*; and to end a little before the *Dioclefian Perſecution*, or the tenth and laſt general Perſecution, commonly call'd the *Æra of the Martyrs*, and which begins the *Smyrnean State*: So that the *Primitive State of Chriſtianity* denoted by *Epheſus*, laſted juſt about two hundred Years, that is, from the End of the Firſt Beginning of the Fourth Century; towards the latter Part of which State the Chriſtian Zeal and Love began to abate, as we ſhall ſee hereafter.

‖ *Christ's Title.* ‖ Ibid. *These things saith He that holdeth the Seven Stars in his Right Hand, who walketh in the midst of the Seven Candlesticks.* — By the *Stars* I understand the Pastors of the Church, according to that of the Prophet *Daniel.* — *They that are wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness as the Stars for ever and ever.* Where, by the *Wise*, we are, doubtless, to understand the *People of God*, in Contradistinction to the *Pastors of the Church*, whose peculiar Province it is to labour in the great Work of *turning many to Righteousness.* The former are wise unto Salvation, but wise only or chiefly for themselves; the latter are not only to take Care of their own, but to set forward the Salvation of All. And the different Resemblance here made in the Comparison, seems to justify this Distinction. For whereas the *Firmament*, to which the *Wise* are liken'd, is one vast *Expansum* of Matter inclusive of, but really distinct from, those glittering Luminaries the *Stars*, which are placed at convenient Distances from each other to dissipate the Darkness of their respective Orbs, and by their united Refulgency to illuminate the whole celestal Frame: So in the *Church Catholick* there is a peculiar and distinct Order of Men appointed for *Burning and Shining Lights*, which according to their several Capacities and the Ex-

tent

tent of their different Spheres of Acting, are to enlighten thoſe that ſit in Darkneſs, and, by their Joint Endeavours, to communicate the Light of the glorious Goſpel to the whole Body of Chriſtian People, whereſoever diſperſt throughout the face of the Earth. And as in the *Natural* World this *Firmament* would be involv'd in one perpetual and univerſal Darkneſs without the greater and leſſer Lights of Heaven; ſo in the *Moral* World Mankind would labour under a total Eclipſe of ſpiritual Darkneſs, if thoſe Burning and Shining Lights of the Church were once extinct. And ſince there is ſo great an Analogy between the *Paſtors* of the Church and the *Stars* of Heaven, under the preſent State of Things, the Reſemblance will not be leſſen'd, but rather enlarged in a future State of Recompence: And therefore moſt fitly are Biſhops and Paſtors here denoted by *Stars*, both in regard of the Reſplendency of their Doctrine and Example, and with reſpect likewiſe to the Preheminency of their Reward.

By *Candleſticks*, our Saviour himſelf acquaints Us, We are to underſtand *Churches*. In the *Jewiſh* Church there was but *One Candleſtick* with Seven Lamps, to denote that the true Religion was then confined to One Nation; but in the *Chriſtian* Church there are *Seven*, which is a Number of Univerſality and Perfection, to ſignify the diffuſing

fuſing the Light of the Goſpel throughout all Nations. For a *Candleſtick* is deſign'd both to receive and emit the Light; and as in the Symbol it thus fitly denotes the Church in general, ſo wherever it is fix'd, it ſhews the Dignity and Preheminency of that Church above any other, by the more than ordinary Illumination of the Holy Ghoſt. And theſe Candleſticks are ſaid to be of *Gold*, to ſhew both their intrinſick Worth, and their Stability or Durableneſs againſt all Oppreſſion and Oppoſition.

The Title then that *Chriſt* here gives himſelf is peculiarly adapted to the State and Condition of the *Primitive Church*. To be *held in the Right Hand* is a Mark of Honour and Safety. To *walk in the midſt of* any thing betokens Superiority, Inſpection, and Viſitation. Our Saviour therefore deſigns to aſſure the Angel of the Church in *Epheſus*, by this Title, that he is the glorious Protector and the great Biſhop of all the Churches; that the Paſtors, who are the *Stars in his Right Hand*, are more immediately under his Care and Inſpection; conſequently, that whoever touches or offers Violence to them, *touches the Apple of his Eye*, and is guilty of as great Preſumption as if he ſhould attempt to ſnatch or wreſt a Thing out of the Hands of Omnipotence: At the ſame Time intimating to thoſe Primitive Clergy and Laity, that they were not to lay

claim

claim to, or think to engroſs this whole Privilege, or imagine themſelves the *only* Objects of their Saviour's ſpecial Regard and Protection; ſince there were *Six* other Churches or States of Chriſtianity that were alike entitled to this Favour, and ſubject to the like Viſitation: That, however, ſince moſt of the others would degenerate, and not live up to this original Standard of Purity and Perfection, and yet be equally under his Rule and Governance; they had Reaſon to argue *à fortiori*, that they themſelves who were the Firſt Fruits of the Spirit, the moſt Veteran Soldiers of Chriſt, and to be Patterns to After-Ages, ſhould not be deſtitute of his gracious Favour and Almighty Protection.

One Thing farther may be learnt from this Title, *viz.* that *Chriſt*, as the Searcher of Hearts and Viſitor of the Churches, had already, in his Divine Fore-knowledge, inſpected and examin'd the State and Caſe of every Church; and ſo gives Directions and Inſtructions accordingly.

‖ *The Commendation.*

V. 2. *I know thy Works, and thy Labour, and thy Patience.* Which is thus varied and repeated v. 3. *And haſt born, and haſt patience, and for my Name-ſake haſt labour'd, and haſt not fainted.* Which Repetition ſhews *Chriſt*'s Delight to recount the Virtues of his Saints, and points out ſome more than ordinary Service and remarkable Perſeverance. And this

this indeed thoſe Primitive Saints abundantly diſplay'd both in their Active and Paſſive Obedience: For they not only outwardly profeſs'd the greateſt Love to their Bleſſed Maſter, but gave the beſt Teſtimony of that Love by their conſtant Readineſs to lay down their Lives for his Sake. And 'tis wonderful to obſerve, what a great *Fight of Afflictions* theſe Firſt Renown'd Heroes of Chriſtianity ſuſtain'd, having paſs'd through no leſs than ſeven General Perſecutions, beſides ſeveral Topical or Leſſer Ones; as if theſe *Golden* and acceptable Men thus tried in the Fire and in the Furnace of Adverſity, were deſign'd by Providence to bear in their own Bodies the Marks or *Stigmata* of the whole Body of the Faithful in all the ſeveral States and Periods of Chriſtianity. Their Character in general and in ſhort, and which is ſufficient for my preſent Purpoſe, and exactly agreeable to our Saviour's Commendation, is thus ſum'd up by the *Noted Author of Primitive Chriſtianity* —— Here we find a *Piety* active and zealous, ſhining through the ſlackeſt Clouds of Malice and Cruelty; afflicted *Innocence* triumphant, notwithſtanding all the Powerful or Politick Attempts of Men or Devils; a *Patience* unconquerable under the biggeſt Perſecutions; a *Charity* truly Catholick and unlimited; a *Simplicity* and upright Carriage in all Tranſactions; a *Sobriety* and *Temperance* remarkable to the Admiration of their Enemies;

mies; the Divine and Holy Precepts of the Chriſtian Religion drawn down into *Action*, and the moſt excellent *Genius* and Spirit of the Goſpel breathing in the Hearts and Lives of theſe good old Chriſtians.——

Ibid. *And how thou can'ſt not bear them which are Evil*—— This Part of our Saviour's Commendation more particularly reſpects the antient Diſcipline of the Church, which was very awful and very ſtrict; and no leſs effectual to recover the Lapſed, to deter others from ſinning, and to ſecure the Perſeverance of the Faithful; and ſo to preſent to her Lord *a glorious Church, not having Spot, or Wrinkle, or any ſuch Thing; but that it ſhould be Holy, and without Blemiſh.* By this the Primitive Church maintain'd her Dignity and Authority, ſhew'd her infinite Hatred of Sin, her Care and Zeal to diſcourage all Iniquity, to keep Perſons within the Bounds of Order and Regularity, and to preſerve that Strictneſs and Purity of Manners that had rendered her Religion ſo venerable and triumphant in the World. A Diſcipline that had no Reſpect of Perſons, that injoin'd Penances, greater or leſs, longer or ſhorter, according to the Nature of the Crime, ſometimes for ſeveral years together, and ſometimes for the whole Life. Such was the Diſcipline of the Antient Chriſtians, which procured them this Commendation from

Chriſt himſelf, that they *could not bear them which are Evil.*

Ibid. *And haſt tried them which ſay they are Apoſtles, and are not, and haſt found them Liars.*—— St. *Paul* in one Paſſage has ſome Expreſſions parallel to this——*Such were falſe Apoſtles, deceitful Workers, transforming themſelves into the Apoſtles of Chriſt.* But in neither Caſe are we to ſuppoſe that ſuch pretended to be *Apoſtles indeed*, in the primary and principal Senſe of the Word, that is, Perſons immediately choſen and ſent forth by *Chriſt himſelf* in Perſon. No; none of the falſe Teachers could have the Vanity to pretend to ſuch a palpable Falſity as this. We are therefore, no Doubt, to underſtand by thoſe that *ſay they are Apoſtles and are not*, the *Hereſiarchs* of thoſe Days, or the Founders and Firſt Broachers of the ſeveral Hereſies that infeſted the Primitive Church, which were very numerous, and which very likely pretended to an immediate Call (not to the very Office of Preaching, but) to the Delivery of the Doctrines they preach'd or publiſhed to the World. Of this *Montanus* in particular was a notorious Inſtance, and made the higheſt Pretenſions of any Man to Divine Inſpiration, and was even thought by his deluded Followers to be the very *Paraclete*, or the Holy Ghoſt. And though he did not *himſelf* carry his Hereſy to ſuch Extravagance; yet he would have his *Diſciples* believe

believe (and *Tertullian* was one of these Believers) that the Holy Ghost spake and taught by his Mouth. But as the Power of *discerning Spirits* was one of the miraculous Gifts bestow'd upon the Primitive Church, these and the like Pretensions were soon detected and exposed, and the Spreaders of the Poison mark'd out to the Faithful and Orthodox, by the Writings of the Learned and by the Censures of the Church, which rejected and cut them off from her Communion.

The Rebuke. V. 4. *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first Love.*——We can't well suppose that this Rebuke reaches or relates to the *first Christians*, who were before so highly commended for their Patience and Perseverance; but 'tis very applicable to those Christans who lived in the *latter* Part of the *Ephesine State*; who about that Time began to decline, to slacken the Reins of Discipline, and to engage in warm Controversies that eat out the very Heart of Religion. This Declension began to shew itself in some little Measure, and in some few particular Churches, even as early as the Days of St. *Clemens Romanus* and St. *Ignatius*, as we may learn from their Epistles; but was more visible and more general a little before the Rise of *Montanism*, the Remissness of Discipline in the Church giving Birth, in some sense, to that rigid Sect. *While Men sleep, the Enemy sows his Tares*; and

this very brobably was the Occaſion that tempted *Tertullian*, a Man of a moroſe Temper, great Auſterity of Manners, and a rigid Reformer, and who made loud Complaints againſt the Negligence and Supineſs of the Church-Governors, to cloſe in at that Time with the ſevere Diſcipline of *Montanus*. But That which moſt of all ſhews the Juſtneſs and Seaſonableneſs of our Saviour's Rebuke, and might be the chief Ground of his Complaint that the *Angel* or Biſhops *of the Church in Epheſus* had *left their firſt Love*, was the *Quartodecimal Controverſy*, or the many violent Diſputes that aroſe in the Church about the Time of keeping *Eaſter*: The Day the Devil ſo much envied, as being the Birth-day of our Reconciliation to God, being thus, by his Cunning and Malice, turn'd into an Occaſion of Strife and Diſunion amongſt Chriſtians. But then I don't mean the *Begining* of this Controverſy, which the Good St. *Polycarp* labour'd to put an End to, but without Succeſs; for then, notwithſtanding the Difference of Opinions, the Peace and Unity of the Church was ſtill maintain'd: But I mean the *Revival* of this Controverſy by Pope *Victor* towards the latter end of the ſecond Century, who puſh'd the Matter with great Violence, ſet all in a Flame, and proceeded to excommunicate whole Churches. And this unhappy Controverſy continued more or leſs in the Church

for

for a long Time, and was not fully ſettled or determined till the firſt General Council of *Nice*. Well then might our Saviour complain of the *latter* Chriſtians in the *Epheſine State*, that they had *left their firſt Love*, ſince a Spirit of Contention, like a turbulent Wind, always ruffles, and even ſometimes quite extinguiſhes the pure gentle Flame of Charity and Devotion.

To this I may add, that during the Heat of Perſecutions, the *Epheſine* Chriſtians receiv'd the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper every Day* (or as often as they came together for publick Worſhip) as a Sovereign Antidote againſt the Fear of Death, and as the Beſt Preparative for Martyrdom. But after the *Ninth* general Perſecution, they enjoy'd a profound Peace and Tranquility for ſomewhat above forty Years; during which State of Eaſe and Proſperity, the Manners of Chriſtians began to be corrupted, and the Sacrament to be more rarely frequented. And ſo from *once a Day* (as it is ſuppoſed) it came to be receiv'd only *three* or *four* Times in a Week: which Abatement and Decay of the Primitive Zeal and Love (though nothing in Compariſon of what has ſince happen'd in theſe latter Ages of the Church, when inſtead of *three* Times in a *Week*, Chriſtians are contented to Communicate only *three* Times in a *Year*) our Saviour here complains of, and threatens to puniſh. And accordingly God

was

was pleas'd to permit a *Tenth Perſecution* to purge away the Droſs and Defilements the Chriſtians of thoſe Times had contracted during their former Eaſe, to rekindle their Zeal, and recal them to their *firſt Love*

The Exhortation and Threatning.

V. 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the firſt Works, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candleſtick out of his Place, except thou repent.*—— Our Saviour here mercifully warns the latter Chriſtians in the *Epheſine* Church to conſider betimes their former and their preſent State, the Unity and Intenſeneſs of their *firſt Love*, and the unchriſtian Heats and Diviſions they were now run into, to remember from what a Pitch of Heroic Piety they were faln, and to ſtop the Progreſs of Apoſtacy by a ſpeedy Repentance; and to teſtify the Truth of their Repentance by doing the *firſt works*, i. e. by reſettling the antient Diſcipline, by quitting their unreaſonable Animoſities, by communicating more conſtantly, and returning to their *firſt Love*. Otherwiſe he threatens very ſoon to viſit their Offences with a Rod, and even to *remove* their *Candleſtick out of his Place*.

Now *Chriſt's Threatnings* in theſe Epiſtles, though expreſs'd *conditionally*, are likewiſe predictive of what would *certainly* come to paſs, as we find by the Event. The moſt flouriſhing Church in the Primitive Times

was

was perhaps that of EPHESUS, where St. *John* moſtly lived in his latter Days, and where he died. Chriſtianity there thrived, as in its *Native Soil*, and grew to a great Height. But whichever of the ſeveral Churches in the Primitive Times, or within the Period I aſſign for the *Epheſine Age*, we ſuppoſe to be the *moſt famous* and flouriſhing, whether *Rome*, or *Alexandria*, or *Antiock*, or *Epheſus*, or any other, *there* I think we ought to place the *Candleſtick*; as ſymbolically denoting the more peculiar Seat or Reſidence of the Spirit, or the Enjoyment of the greater Light, and more abundant Unction of the Holy Ghoſt. Which Eminency or Priviledge is to be conſider'd as *local* and *moveable*, and the Removal of it as a great *Puniſhment*. Our Saviour's Threatning therefore to the *Church in* EPHESUS to *remove* her *Candleſtick out of his Place*, muſt imply his Reſolution to take away, though not the very *Being* of the Church, yet her Dignity or *Well-Being*, to leſſen her Eſteem in the World, to deſtroy her flouriſhing and proſperous State, and to tranſlate the Glory of it to ſome other Church. Accordingly we find, that not long after the Expiration of this *firſt Period* of Chriſtianity, all the *Epheſine* Churches, even *Rome* itſelf, were really Eclipſed or *Outſhone* by that famous new Church erected upon the Ruins of *Paganiſm* and the Converſion of *Conſtantine*, at *Byzantium* call'd

call'd afterwards in Honour of him *Conſtantinople.*

A farther Commendation.

V. 6. *But this thou haſt, that thou hateſt the Deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I alſo hate.* — The *Nicolaitans* were a peſtilent and impure ſort of Hereticks, that from a miſtaken Expreſſion of *Nicolas*, One of the ſeven Deacons, took occaſion to run into all manner of Lewdneſs and Debauchery, and allow'd of the moſt impudent and ſcandalous Actions imaginable. This Hereſy we may reckon to have ſpread out into two great Branches, *viz.* the *Gnoſticks* and *Adamites*; the former of which Sects I take to be chiefly meant in this Place, being very numerous, and held in the utmoſt Abomination by the firſt Chriſtians, and who ſtill retaining the Name of *Chriſtians*, notwithſtanding they lived in perfect Contradiction to it, gave Occaſion to the Heathens to reflect upon the *Faithful themſelves*, as guilty of thoſe very Crimes in their ſecret Aſſemblies, which they were known to deteſt and puniſh with the utmoſt ſeverity.

The General Admonition.

V. 7. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* —— Here the *Third* Perſon in the Bleſſed Trinity is expreſsly mention'd as concern'd in the *Revelation*; the *Father*, and the *Son* are mention'd before, the *Father* who gave this *Revelation*

velation to *Jeſus Chriſt*, *as Man* or *Mediator*, *Chriſt* himſelf, who ſent his Angel to notify theſe Things to the Churches by his Servant *John*, and the *Holy Ghoſt* who inſpired the Apoſtle, or aided him in recollecting and penning down what was deliver'd to him by the Meſſage of an Angel. So that here is a Concurrence of all the awful Solemnity of Perſons that can be expected or required to engage and command our Attention; the *Father*, who vouchſafed to make the wonderful Diſcovery of theſe Myſterious Secrets and future Events, that had been *hid from Ages and from Generations*; the *Son*, who communicated the ſame to St. *John*; the *Holy Ghoſt*, who enabled the Apoſtle to tranſmit the ſame to preſent and future Generations; the *Angel*, that brought and deliver'd the Meſſages to him; and the *Apoſtle* himſelf, the favourite and beloved Diſciple of *Jeſus*, who was the Penman and Publiſher of theſe Meſſages to the World. Either of which Great Perſonages (and much more All together) is, ſurely, abundantly ſufficient to rouze our Zeal, to awaken our Attention, and to make Us hear what the Lord God has to ſay concerning the Churches. And every Church is required to hear what the Spirit ſays to all the Reſt, either for Example or for Warning; for Inſtruction or Admonition. And, laſtly, that Nothing might be wanting to encourage and enforce our Attention, a

particular *Bleſſing* is pronounced in the firſt Chapter upon *him that readeth*, and upon *them that hear the Words of this Prophecy.*

The Promiſe. Ibid. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God.*—— This Promiſe has reſpect to the *firſt State* of Man in the Time of his Innocence; and therefore is moſt properly applied to the *firſt Chriſtian Church*, that had *firſt* moſt perfectly recover'd the *Image of God* which was loſt, and train'd up Perſons of the greateſt *Innocence* ſince the Days of *Adam*, and the greateſt *Number* of them that the World ever beheld at one Time. And therefore the Priviledge which was freely granted to *Adam*, but never enjoy'd by Him, is here renew'd and ratified to the *Epheſine Church*, of *eating of the Tree of Life which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God.* In general I ſhall here Remark, that all the Promiſes to the Churches, as they are peculiarly ſuited and adapted to each Church according to their different Works, or according to the Difference of Times, States, and Probations, ſo have they all Reſpect to ſome Rights or Privileges to be enjoy'd *before* the final Judgment, or our perfect Conſummation and Bliſs in Heaven. Thus here *Paradiſe* is promiſed to the *Epheſine Chriſtians*, as it was to the *Penitent Thief.* Now whatever we are preciſely to underſtand by *Paradiſe*, there is

no

no Doubt to be made, but there are different Degrees of Honour and Happineſs in the *Paradiſaical* State, as there will be in the *Heavenly*. *The Tree of Life* poſſeſſes the *Higheſt* Poſt of Honour, being placed *in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God*, as the *Throne of God is in the midſt of Heaven*: And therefore to *eat of the Tree of Life* muſt be the *Higheſt* Privilege of this State. And this Privilege, whatever it be, muſt be greater to the *Primitive Chriſtians*, than it can be to thoſe that follow, as they enter'd ſooner and were to continue longer in a ſtate of Separation, even to the Time of the firſt Reſurrection. And That which gives them a Title to the *firſt Rank*, in the Region of *Paradiſe*, will, by Parity of Reaſon, entitle them to the ſame in the *Millennial* State, and afterwards in the *Heavenly* Manſions.

CHAP. III. *Ep.* II.

An Expoſition of Chriſt's *Epiſtle to the Church in* SMYRNA.

V. 8. AND *to the Angel of the Church in* SMYRNA *write.*——‖ *Smyrna* ſignifies any Thing of a pleaſing or grateful Smell; which exactly ſuits the Character of the Chriſtians within this *Second Period*; when the *Blood of the*

‖ *The Meaning of the Word Smyrna.*

Martyrs that was ſhed on every ſide, became (in a higher Senſe than St. *Paul* intended the Expreſſion) *an Odour of a ſweet ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, and well-pleaſing unto God.*

* *The Beginning and End of the Smyrnean State.*

* The *Æra* of the *Smyrnean Church* I take to be the ſame as the *Æra of the Martyrs*, which commenced with the tenth and laſt general Perſecution, called the *Dioclefian*, though begun, executed, and carried on at the Inſtance and expreſs Orders of that bitter Enemy of the Chriſtians (in Conjuction with his Colleague *Maximin*) *Galerius*. And this continued for the Space of Ten Years and near four Months or till the Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity by Humane Laws in the Days of *Conſtantine the Great*; which put an End at once to the Perſecution of the Chriſtians, and to that *ſecond State of Chriſtianity* which is here denoted by the *Church in Smyrna*.

Nor can we wonder, that *Chriſt* ſhould ſo remarkably diſtinguiſh this ſhort ſpace of Time, as to make it ſtand for the Period of a *whole* Church, or for the *Seventh* Part of his *Catholick Church* upon Earth, if we only conſider the Multitude of Martyrs in thoſe Days, which exceeded in Number all that any Age or Part of the Church had ever ſeen before or ſince. There never was indeed in the whole World, ſo terrible, ſo long, and ſo univerſal a Perſecution, as this was. It

began

began at the very firſt with the Slaughter of *Seventeen thouſand Men within thirty Days.* In *Egypt* only were ſlain *One hundred forty and four Thouſand,* (the Number of the Sealed) and *ſeven hundred Thouſand* exiled. By this may be gueſs'd what was done in other Places. This made *Sulpitius Severus* cry out, *that almoſt the whole World was dy'd red with the Blood of the Martyrs.* To prepare the Chriſtians of thoſe Days for this bloody Conflict and fiery Tryal, our Saviour in this ſhort Epiſtle urges the moſt proper and forcible Motives that could be made uſe of for their Support and Encouragement, as may be ſeen, firſt, in the Title he here gives himſelf, and 2*dly*, in the Promiſe he gives the *Smyrneans.*

Chriſt's Title. Ibid. *Theſe things ſaith the First and the Laſt, which was dead, and is alive.* — *Theſe things ſaith the Firſt and the Laſt*; q. d. I was with the firſt Church, and will be with the laſt, and conſequently with all that come between them, and therefore will not leave *thee*, nor forſake *thee. I am the Almighty, I change not*; therefore ye Faithful in the Church of SMYRNA ſhall not be conſumed. For I am preſent with you to ſtand by You, and to ſuccour You, to lift up the Hands that hang down, and to ſtrengthen the feeble Knees, that ye faint not in this Warfare. Only be ſtrong and quit your ſelves like Men; and I will be your God and

your

your Guide unto Death. For your farther Encouragement conſider, that I am He *which was dead, and is alive.* Look unto me the Great Martyr of the Church, who loved you, and gave Myſelf for you: Look unto me *the Author and Finiſher of your Faith*, who, *for the Joy that was ſet before* me became *obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*; and *Behold I am alive for evermore, and have the Keys of Hell and of Death*, and ſo Power over theſe to *open* and *ſhut*; and therefore can reſtore You to Life again, yea, to an infinitely better Life than you now enjoy; of which I have given you a ſufficient Earneſt and Demonſtration in having rais'd Myſelf.

The Commendation.

V. 9. *I know thy Works, and Tribulation, and Poverty, (but thou art Rich.)* —— This and *Philadelphia* are the *only* Churches that are commended without any Rebuke. The *Smyrnean* Chriſtians (*of whom the World was not worthy*) ſtruggled a long Time under the greateſt Hardſhips and Oppreſſions, and endured the ſharpeſt and moſt grievous Perſecutions both from *Jews* and *Heathens.* In the midſt of theſe great Trials, they were *as ſorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things.* The Account we have from Hiſtory of their incomparable Patience almoſt ſurpaſſes Belief. With the greateſt

eſt Chearfulneſs they underwent the moſt cruel Kinds of Death that the Wit and Malice of their Enemies could invent. They even thirſted after Martyrdom, and courted the Racks and the Flames. *In the Sight of the Unwiſe they ſeem'd* to periſh, but *in the ſight of the Lord their Death was precious; for God proved them, and found them worthy for himſelf. As Gold in the Furnace he tried them, and receiv'd them as a Burnt-Offering.* But there was ſome Droſs mix'd with the Gold, and among theſe glorious Martyrs were found ſome Revolters; which might, in Part, occaſion the following Cenſure.

Ibid. *I know the Blaſphemy of them which ſay they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan*—— which may either relate to thoſe who were call'd *Traditores*, i. e. ſuch as had delivered up the Bibles and conſecrated Veſſels belonging to the Church, and fall'n away in that Day of Trial (about which, One or Two Counils were held) for *there muſt be* Perſecutions ſometimes, as well as *Hereſies, that they who are approv'd may be made manifeſt.* Or elſe this may refer only to the *Jews*, whom the word *Synagogue* ſeems to point out, and who at this Time proved themſelves indeed *not to be the true People of God*, but *the Synagogue of Satan.* For they not only inſtigated, but join'd with the Heathens in this dreadful Perſecution, nay, even aided and aſſiſted them in preparing the very

ry Fires that were to burn the Chriſtians. And it might be neceſſary to remind and warn the *Smyrneans* of this, leaſt ſeeing the *Jews* favour'd by the *Roman* Emperors, and themſelves under Perſecution, they might be tempted to fall away: But when our Saviour aſſures them that theſe *Jews*, notwithſtanding their Countenance from the Government and their preſent Proſperity, were no better than Blaſphemers, and *the Synagogue of Satan*, this was ſufficient Encouragement to the Chriſtians to deſpiſe alike their Inſults and Temptations.

The Exhortation. V. 10. *Fear none of thoſe things which thou ſhalt ſuffer; behold, the Devil ſhall caſt ſome of you into Priſon, that ye may be tried; and ye ſhall have Tribulation Ten Days.* —— In theſe and the foregoing Words it is very obſervable, that our Saviour ſays every thing that may hearten, and avoids ſaying any thing that may diſhearten the Chriſtians under their Trial. He tells them of *Sufferings*, *Impriſonment*, and *Tribulation*; but not a Word directly of *Death*. He ſpeaks of *ſome*, but takes no Notice of the vaſt *Multitudes*, that were to ſuffer. So tenderly does he deal with them, and ſo wiſely conſult their natural Infirmity. For all Temporal Calamity appears much bigger in the *Expectation*, than in the *Event*; and were we always to know beforehand the full Time and Meaſure of

our

our Suffering, we ſhould be apt to ſtagger at the very Proſpect of it, and ſo be leſs able to bear it. 'Tis therefore a common, though not the conſtant Method of Providence, to lead Men inſenſibly, as it were, into Trouble; and by the Endurance of One or more light Afflictions, to prepare and fortify them for greater. Our Saviour likewiſe here directs the *Smyrnean* Chriſtians to conſider their Grand Enemy the *Devil*, as the *firſt Mover* and principal Agent in all the Perſecutions of the Church; which might be a means to cool and ſuppreſs their Reſentments againſt the *immediate Inſtruments* of their Sufferings and Execution. Once more, He forewarns them of a *Ten Days* Tribulation, but leaves them to underſtand it either of *common* or *prophetical* Days: Though we that know the Event, can juſtly apply theſe Days to no other Period of Time, than that of the *Dioclefian Perſecution*, with which, in every Reſpect and Circumſtance, they ſo exactly agree. Laſtly, though he does not think fit to acquaint them with the very worſt that ſhould happen, he exhorts them however to provide againſt the Worſt.

The Promiſe. Ibid. *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life:* with which we may conſider that other Motive in the next Verſe—— *He that overcometh ſhall not be hurt of the Second Death:* which Our Saviour adds, that by

two ſtrong Bands or Cords he might tie them faſt to their Duty. The Conflict was great, and the Trial hazardous, and their Caſe required the moſt forceible Incentives to Faithfulneſs and Perſeverance: And he provides for them accordingly. By the former Motive he animates their Courage, and enlivens their Hope; offers them a Crown, but not One of Laurels, or of Gold, but *a Crown of Life*, a *Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge* has prepar'd for all his faithful Soldiers that *fight the good Fight of Faith*, and are willing to lay down their Lives for his Sake. For *from the Lord's Hand ſhall they receive a Beautiful Crown*, which will as eminently diſtinguiſh the *Martyrs* from other Chriſtians in the next World, as they are diſtinguiſh'd by their Sufferings in this. But leaſt the Promiſe of future Life ſhould not be ſufficient alone to overcome the Fear of preſent Death, he farther endeavours to drive away this Fear from them, by an Object of greater Terror. *He that overcometh ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond Death.* The *firſt Death* is the Death of the *Body*, the *Second* is the Death of *Body* and *Soul* too, in the *Fire that never ſhall be quenched.* And what would a Man not give or part with in this World, to be *abſolutely ſecure* againſt this *greateſt Evil?* This *abſolute ſecurity*, our Saviour plainly intimates, is attainable even here. 'Tis a *preſent Reward* beſtow'd and attending

attending upon the *Martyrs*, before and at the Time of their Execution. Other Chriſtians may go out of the World with a well-grounded Hope, and good Aſſurance of fleeing from the *Wrath to come*, and eſcaping the *ſecond Death*. But none but the *Martyrs* can (without an immediate Revelation) be *infallibly ſure* of it: But 'tis *their* Priviledge and Prerogative to *know for certain*, that they *ſhall not be hurt of the Second Death*. As ſurely as they lay down their Lives for *Chriſt's* ſake, ſo ſurely ſhall they eſcape the *ſecond Death*. *He that overcometh*, he that ſuffereth Martyrdom, *ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond Death*. Which is the higheſt Encouragement that can poſſibly be given to *reſiſt unto Blood*, and to be *faithful unto Death*; eſpecially if it be conſider'd withal, that the neceſſary and unavoidable Conſequence of this, is the *ſure and certain Attainment of Eternal Life*.

The Monitory Concluſion.

V. 11. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* ——

All and every Chriſtian in the World are deeply concern'd in the Contents of theſe Epiſtles, and repeatedly required to give diligent Attention to the Inſtructions, Exhortations, Promiſes, and Threatnings of All in general, and of Each One in particular, as Matters of the greateſt Moment and Importance. And farther, the continued Repeti-

tion of one and the ſame Warning under each Epiſtle, imports the great Backwardneſs of Chriſtians to hear and conſider theſe things, and their Negligence and Averſeneſs to get a right Underſtanding of them.

CHAP. IV. *Ep.* III.

An Expoſition of Chriſt's *Epiſtle to the Church in* PERGAMUS.

V. 12. *AND to the Angel of the Church in* PERGAMUS *write.*—†*Pergamus* ſignifies a Tower upon a Hill, lofty and conſpicuous, that commands all around and may be ſeen afar off: And ſo fitly and Symbolically repreſents the Church in her *Eminent* and *Flouriſhing* State; which was the real Condition of the Church after the Converſion of *Conſtantine* to the Chriſtian Faith; and to which may very congruouſly be applied that Prophecy of *Iſaiah*——*And it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt Days, that the Mountains of the Lord's Houſe ſhall be eſtabliſh'd in the Top of the Mountains, and ſhall be exalted above the Hills, and all Nations ſhall flow unto it.* For here likewiſe is a Mountain upon a Mountain, a glorious Church erected upon the flouriſhing State of the Empire,

† *The Myſtical Name of the Third Church or State of Chriſtianity.*

Empire, and Chriſtianity eſtabliſh'd by the Higheſt Civil Power then in Being. It had gone through Fire and Water, and climb'd up Rocks and Precipices; but now, by the bountiful Favour of Heaven, and miraculous Interpoſition of Providence it happily gain'd the Aſcendant, and was ſoon ſettled upon ſo firm a Baſis, that the *Gates of Hell* have not yet been able to overthrow it, or *prevail againſt it.* It has flouriſh'd more or leſs ever ſince under the Protection of Chriſtian Princes. *Kings* have been its *Nurſing-fathers* and *Queens* its *Nurſing-Mothers.*

The Duration of this State.

But That *State of Chriſtianity* which relates to, or is denoted by, *Pergamus*, I ſuppoſe to have continued no longer than the Fall of *the Weſtern* Empire in the Perſon of *Auguſtulus* A. D. 476; this Church, as it roſe, ſo declining all along with the State, till it came to its full Period, in the Loſs of one Half of the Empire, and Declenſion of the Other.

Chriſt's Title.

Ibid. *Theſe things ſaith He who hath the ſharp two-edged Sword.* —— This farther confirms what I obſerv'd above, and plainly ſhews that the State of the Church repreſented by *Pergamus*, belongs to that Period of Time I have aſſign'd for it, and to that only. For then and not before, was there an *Union* and Conjunction of the *ſacred* and *Civil* Powers, of which the

ſharp

ſharp two-edged Sword is a very proper and ſignificant Emblem, as denoting primarily *Chriſt* in his *Regal* and *Sacerdotal* Capacity, and now *firſt* lodging theſe two Powers in his Church. And this he mentions with a Deſign that the Church ſhould take particular Notice of it, and not neglect to make Uſe of the awful Authority entruſted with Her, and bear neither the Sword, nor the Keys in vain.

The Commendation.

V. 13. *I know thy Works, and where thou dwelleſt, even where Satan's Seat is.*——Our Saviour here ſhews that he is not unrighteous to forget the Works of his faithful Servants, and their Labour of Love; ſince he takes particular Notice of, and therefore ſeems willing to make Allowances for, the Diſadvantages of their Condition. He tells the Church in *Pergamus*, that he knows their Dwelling to be for the preſent moſt unhappily ſituated, *even where Satan's Seat* or Throne *is*; that is, at *Byzantium*, an Heathen City, over-run with *Pagan Idolatry*, and Conſequently a chief Place of Reſidence for *Satan* and his Worſhipers; where we do not find that Chriſtianity was ever planted before. To this City, when New-built, *Conſtantine* by degrees tranſlated the Glory of *Old Rome*; which, after his ſignal Victories over all his Enemies, and peaceful Settlement in the Throne, became the Seat of true Religion as

as well as the Seat of the Empire; and where we have the juſteſt Grounds to fix the *Third Golden Candleſtick.*

Ibid. *And thou holdeſt faſt my Name, and haſt not denied my Faith, even in thoſe Days wherein Antipas was my faithful Martyr, who was ſlain among You, where Satan dwelleth.* — Every Sentence or Expreſſion here is highly worthy Obſervation. *And thou holdeſt faſt my Name*, i. e. My Antient as well as New Name, my Name from Everlaſting, *the Word* or *Son of God*; that is, thou maintaineſt the Truth of my Divinity againſt all Oppoſers; and in the moſt Authentick Manner, and in the moſt numerous and ſolemn Aſſembly of the Angels of the ſeveral Churches, even at the General Council of *Nice*, haſt ſettled and eſtabliſh'd the true Profeſſion and Recognition of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and given a Publick Symbol of thy Faith (with regard more particularly to what relates to *my Divine Nature*) as the Ground or Standard of Orthodoxy to all future Generations. *And haſt not denied my Faith, even in thoſe Days, wherein Antipas was my faithful Martyr*; i. e. Notwithſtanding the Current of the Times againſt thee, haſt ſtill perſiſted in the Profeſſion and Vindication of the True Faith, even in the Reigns of ſome of the *Arian* Emperors, when the Hereticks were highly in Favour, and the Orthodox under Perſecution; nay, even then too, when

Arianiſm

Arianiſm was come to its higheſt Pitch, and ſeem'd to carry all before it, *even in the Days wherein Antipas was my faithful Martyr.* This I take to be not a *proper*, but a fictitious or *myſtical* Name, to denote ſome eminent Perſon that, in ſome ſenſe, may be ſaid to have ſtood ſingle or *Alone*, in the midſt of an univerſal Corruption, a Perſon that every One was againſt, and he againſt every One, as the Word ſignifies: which was truly the Caſe of the Great *Athanaſius*; of whom it was at laſt Proverbially ſaid, that *All the World was againſt Athanaſius, and Athanaſius againſt all the World.* This undoubtedly is the *Antipas* here pointed at, and deſcrib'd by our Saviour, *who was ſlain among You, where Satan dwelleth.* But does not this overthrow the former Aſſertion? No, by no Means. As St. *John* himſelf was ever reckon'd by the Church in the Number of *Martyrs*, though he was miraculouſly deliver'd from the boiling Caldron of Oyl into which he was thrown, and afterwards died a natural Death: So may the Great *Athanaſius* be juſtly ſtyled a *faithful Martyr*, if we only conſider that he expoſed himſelf to a thouſand Deaths for the ſake of Truth, and in Defence of his Saviour; that the falſeſt and blackeſt Accuſations that the Malice of Men or Devils could invent, were brought againſt him; that he was charg'd even with downright Murder, in order to be murder'd himſelf:

But

But how he confounded his Adverſaries to their Face, by producing the very Perſon he was charg'd with the Murder of; how he anſwer'd their Accuſations, and eſcaped their Malice, are Particulars too long to be inſiſted on in this Place, and which none of the Learned are unacquainted with. 'Tis ſufficient to my preſent Purpoſe to obſerve, that the Perſecutors of this faithful and couragious Servant of *Chriſt* have here a particular Mark of Infamy ſet upon them by our Lord, *viz.* that though the *Pagan Idolatry* was now put down and aboliſhed, yet, by Reaſon of the great Prevalence of the *Arian Hereſy*, the faithful Chriſtians are ſaid to live ſtill *where Satan dwelleth*; a plain and ſtrong Intimation, that *Arianiſm* is as much a *Satanical* Deluſion, as even *Paganiſm* itſelf. It is farther obſervable from the Commendation here given to the Church in PERGAMUS, during theſe Days of Corruption, that by the *Church* we are all along to underſtand the *Beſt* and *Pureſt* Part of the Church for the Time being; not any Corrupt or *Heretical* Part, how large, extenſive, or prevailing ſoever for a Time, with which *the True Church of Chriſt*, is no farther concern'd, than as abetting, or ſuffering, or conniving at the ſame, when in her Power to hinder or put a ſtop to it; which we find reprov'd accordingly.

The Rebuke. V. 14, 15. *But I have a few things againſt thee; becauſe thou*

thou haſt there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to caſt a ſtumbling-block before the Children of Iſrael, to eat things Sacrificed to Idols, and to commit Fornication. So haſt thou alſo them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. —— The Ground and Occaſion of this Complaint of our Saviour I take to be this —— When *Chriſtianity* was newly eſtabliſhed, and *Paganiſm* but juſt upon the Decline, too many weak Chriſtians were perſuaded by the Allurements of ſome ſuch Counſellors as *Balaam, who taught Balac to caſt a ſtumbling-block before the Children of Iſrael*, to Partake of the Sacrifices made at the Idol-Temples, and other Heathen Rites; which Practice was not then vigorouſly reſtrain'd, or ſo duly cenſured, as it ought to have been. The *Chriſtian* Emperors, who had the Power in their Hands, did not aboliſh *Paganiſm* all at once, but only by Degrees. Though ſome of them order'd the Temples to be ſhut up, yet Others either caus'd or ſuffer'd them to be open'd; and Idolatry to be practiſed publickly, and All of them privately. Which open Allowance or Connivance of theirs drew Many into ſinful Compliances, and even to commit Fornication and other Uncleaneſſes, commonly allow'd of and practiſed by the Heathen. To which may be added, that the diſtinguiſhing Marks of Favour and Honour, which were now confer'd upon the

Governors

Governors of the Church, began ſenſibly to ſoften and corrupt that Holy Severity that had ſo long flouriſh'd amongſt them: ſo that at this Time the Diſcipline of the Church was very much relaxed, in Return, as it were, for the large Endowments receiv'd from Kings and Emperors.

The Exhortation and Threatning.

V. 16. *Repent, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight againſt them with the Sword of my Mouth.* —— The Repentance here required of the Angel of the Church in PERGAMUS, and of thoſe under his Care, was to put a ſtop to the Impieties and Enormities before complain'd of (ſubſiſting chiefly in the Beginning of this Period) and to revive the antient Diſcipline. Otherwiſe Chriſt threatens to viſit the Angel ſpeedily, and to puniſh the Delinquents with the Sword of his Mouth: which we may reaſonably ſuppoſe to have been effectually done at the famous Council of *Nice*, in which the Civil and Spiritual Powers were happily united; and in which Matters relating to Government and Diſcipline, as well as to Doctrine and Worſhip, were fully ſettled and eſtabliſhed.

The uſual Admonition.

V. 17. *He that hath an Ear let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* —— There ſeem to be two Reaſons, why in Every Epiſtle we are commanded to hear what

the Spirit ſaith not to *this* or *that particular* Church only, but to *the Churches in general.* The firſt is, that Each Church is taken *Collectively*, to denote all the ſeveral Chriſtian Churches within ſuch a Period of Time, or State of Chriſtianity; ſo that what is ſpoken to One, is ſpoken to All, and what belongs to One, belongs to All. The Second, is, that all the *Succeeding* Churches to the End of the World, are ſome way or other concern'd in what is written to each Church; ſo that the Spirit, in ſpeaking to the Preſent, ſpeaks, in a manner, to all that are to follow. Thus in particular what is here written to the Church in PERGAMUS, has a manifeſt Relation to the State and Condition of all the Churches that have been ſince, or ever ſhall be in the World. *He* therefore *that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.*

The Promiſe. Ibid. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna, and will give him a white Stone, and in the Stone a new Name written which no Man knoweth ſaving he that receiveth it.* —— The Reward here promiſed conſiſts of two Parts, one preſent, and the other future. The *preſent* Reward to him that overcometh, or that *fights the good Fight of Faith*, and (as the State of this Period particularly requires) maintains the Truth of *Chriſt's Divinity*, is to *eat of the hidden Manna*;

na; which in general may be thus explain'd; that as the *outward Manna* was rain'd down upon the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, and till they came into the land of *Canaan*, to ſuſtain them under, and to ſupply the Want of other Food: ſo *Chriſt* will rain down on the Soul of *him that overcometh* (though outwardly oppreſs'd) *inward Joy and Comfort*, to ſuſtain him under his Sufferings and during his Abode here on Earth. But wherein this *inward Joy and Comfort* does preciſely conſiſt, No Expoſitor that I know of has yet attempted to explain. I ſhall therefore ſhew very briefly what I take to be the true Meaning of this Expreſſion. Now conſidering the Circumſtances of the Caſe, the Privilege of partaking of the *hidden Manna* muſt imply or denote a full and comfortable Aſſurance, or *abſolute Certainty of being on the ſide of Truth* in profeſſing and contending for the Doctrine of *Chriſt*'s *Divinity*; which is equivalent, or rather ſuperior to all the Acknowledgments and Applauſes of the World, even as *Manna* was equal to, if not exceeding, all other Food. And whoever has been ſo happy as to have had the Experience, muſt know that there can't well be a greater Comfort or Encouragement, than to be *abſolutely ſure* of a Truth (and that too One of the higheſt Importance) that is *every where ſpoken againſt*, that is almoſt univerſally oppos'd, diſcountenanced, and condemned, as

was

was the Caſe of thoſe Times, and may be ſo again. Sure I am that our Saviour thought this a Matter of great Comfort, when he pronounced *Simon Peter* Bleſſed for making this very Confeſſion, in the midſt of Ignorance and Unbelief, *viz.* that he was *the Chriſt, the ſon of the Living God.* —— *Bleſſed art thou Simon Barjona, for Fleſh and Blood hath not reveal'd it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.* It will perhaps be Objected, that a Man in Error may have as ſtrong an Aſſurance in his own mind and be as fully perſuaded of being in the Right, as he that after the beſt and moſt impartial Inquiry embraces and eſpouſes the Truth; and ſo will become equally entitled to the Benefits of this Promiſe. But not to mention other Differences between the two Caſes, it may ſuffice here to obſerve, that an Erroneous Perſon is always eager to propagate his Notions, and commonly purſues them with a bitter Zeal and furious Oppoſition to All Others: whereas the Man of Truth and Sincerity is content to think by Himſelf, and is not *haſty* to impoſe his Thoughts upon others, according to That of St. *Paul, Haſt thou Faith? Have it to thyſelf before God*; and ſo is always *ſatisfied from himſelf*, enjoying that ſweet ſerenity, and well-grounded Complacency of Mind, which always attend the Lovers and Followers of Truth; who taſte of the *hidden Manna* in a way that is unſpeakable,

ſpeakable, and utterly unknown to the Broachers and Spreaders of Error. 2. The *future* Reward is repreſented by a *white Stone*, and *a New Name written* on that Stone *which no Man knows but he that receives it*; which is ſpoken in Alluſion to the common Games among the *Romans*, in which the Judges gave a Ticket to the *Victors* to receive the Reward that belong'd to them; the Value or Quality whereof, together with their Names, was written on the ſaid Ticket. But what the Ticket or *New Name* of the *Chriſtian* Conquerors particularly ſignifies, I ſhall not preſume to explain or Conjecture, ſince 'tis here expreſsly declar'd that *No One knows it but he that receives it.*

CHAP. V. *Ep.* IV.

An Expoſition of Chriſt's *Epiſtle to the Church in* THYATIRA.

The Name of the fourth Church explain'd.

V. 18. AND *unto the Angel of the Church in* THYATIRA *write.*

——THYATIRA, according to the Etymology of the Word, imports *Sacrifice*; which is the antient Name to denote all Kind of Religious Worſhip, whether *pure* or *corrupt*. Here I ſuppoſe it ſtands for both; the former belonging to this Church ſo far as the

the firſt Part of her Character reaches, in which ſhe receives Commendation from *Chriſt*, and the latter for all the remaining Part, in which ſhe ſtands reproved and condemned, as ſuffering Innovations in the antient Faith and Worſhip, or as adding the Inventions of Men to the pure Worſhip of God, which brought upon her the Guilt both of Sacrilege and Idolatry; as we ſhall ſee, when we come to conſider the Riſe and Progreſs of *Popery*, which is ſo plainly ſet forth in this Epiſtle.

The Period of This Church. Accordingly we may date the *Æra* of this Church from the Downfal of the *Weſtern* Empire A. D. 476; and reckon that it came to its full Period about the Time of the *Dark Age*, that is, in the Middle of the *Ninth* or Beginning of the *Tenth* Century; when Superſtition and Ignorance met together and kiſs'd each other.

The Title of Chriſt. Ibid. *Theſe things ſaith the Son of God, who hath his Eyes like unto a Flame of Fire, and his Feet like unto fine Braſs.* —— By this Title our Saviour reminds the *Thyatirians*, with whom they had to do, and to whom they muſt give an Account; even to the true and proper *Son of God*, of the ſame Nature and Subſtance with the Father; and therefore that they ſhould be careful both in the outward Acts of worſhip, and the inward Devotion of the Heart,

by

by the Soundneſs of their Faith, and the Purity of their Lives, to acknowledge his real and eſſential Divinity; who is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil with the leaſt Approbation, and yet of ſuch piercing Eyes too, even *Eyes like unto a Flame of Fire*, that he cannot but behold it, and will ſeverely puniſh it; being able, by his Divine Omniſcience, to penetrate into all the inmoſt Receſſes of the Soul, and to bring to open Light all the ſubtle Diſguiſes, and all the firſt Springs of Hereſy and Superſtition; and, without being unalterably determin'd to ſtand by the *everlaſting Goſpel* he has caus'd to be publiſh'd to the World, without any Additions to it, or Diminutions from it; which he ſufficiently intimates by ſaying that his *Feet are like unto fine Braſs*, this Expreſſion denoting both the Firmneſs and Purity of his Purpoſes, and his Strength to accompliſh them. And therefore it highly concern'd the Church in *Thyatira* to *ſtand in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old Paths; where is the good Way* their Forefathers *walk'd in*, that they might walk in the ſame, and *find Reſt for their Souls?*

The Commendation.

V. 19. *I know thy Works, and Charity, and Service, and Faith, and thy Patience, and thy Works, and the laſt to be more than the firſt.* —— All the Particulars of this Commendation, except the laſt, principally relate to the firſt and purer State of the Church in

Thyatira, that is, till A. D. 606, when the Tyrant *Phocas* made his Grant to *Boniface* III. Biſhop of *Rome*; whereby that Biſhop was declar'd univerſal Biſhop, and his Church the Head of all Churches, and he thereupon claim'd to himſelf that Supremacy, which he has ſince uſurp'd over the Church of *Chriſt*. And here the noted *Æra* of *Popery* is commonly fix'd. Before this and for ſome Time after, the *Thyatirian* State of the Church was remarkable (as our Saviour here foretels) for Works of *Piety*, and *Charity*, and *Faith*, and *Patience*. The Chriſtians of thoſe Times were zealous, diligent, and aſſiduous to plant Chriſtianity in diſtant Parts, to convert the Heathens and to confirm thoſe that were newly converted. Inſtances of this might be given in Abundance; but to mention only a few Particulars, chiefly in relation to Ourſelves. *Auſtin* and other zealous Monks were ſent over by *Gregory* Biſhop of *Rome* about A. D. 596, to preach the Goſpel in *England*; and were the happy Inſtruments of planting Chriſtianity here, and converting the *Engliſh-Saxons*, and of erecting ſeveral Biſhopricks and Churches. *Conſtantine* and *Columba* preach'd the Goſpel in *Scotland*. St. *Patrick* labour'd 60 Years in converting the Natives of *Ireland*; and founded no leſs than 365 Churches. *Willibroad*, an *Engliſh* Prieſt, made a conſiderable Progreſs in converting the People of *Weſt-Friſeland*,

 and

and erected ſeveral Churches and Monaſteries: And in the Eighth Century, Chriſtianity was ſo well eſtabliſh'd in *England*, and Religion was ſo deeply rooted in the Hearts of Men, that no leſs than three Kings in *England*, viz. *Cenred*, *Offa*, and *Ina*, quitted their Crowns, and betook themſelves to a Monaſtick Life, ſpending the Remainder of their Days in Acts of Self-denial, Charity, and Devotion.

Another Inſtance of the Piety and Charity of the *Thyatirians*, though already noted by the way, was the great Care and Expence they were at in building Churches, Hoſpitals, Monaſteries, Colleges, and other Religious Houſes; which Works our Saviour would not commend them for, if they had not been acceptable in his Sight; which they moſt certainly are, ſo long as they are not abuſed to Superſtition. Nay, he tells Us that their *laſt Works were more than the firſt*; which is manifeſtly true of thoſe that embraced the *Popiſh* Errors in the middle and latter Parts of the *Thyatirian* State; none having been more zealous and forward, than the *Papiſts* are known to have been all along, to erect and beautify Churches, and to uſe all Means and Methods of advancing Piety and Religion in their own way. And it muſt be acknowledg'd, that 'tis to their Zeal, Piety, and Liberality that we owe many Colleges and Halls in our two famous Univerſities, and

moſt of the Churches we have now in this Iſland; and the Oldeſt of them perhaps we may find, upon Enquiry, to have been founded within that Period of Time I call the *Thyatirian*. In ſhort, *Thyatira*, as the Word imports, and the State of Chriſtianity in thoſe Days plainly ſhews, is the true Repreſentative or Pattern of *outward* Holineſs, as *Smyrna* and *Epheſus* were of the *inward*. Thoſe were poor in the Eye of the World, but rich unto God: This, though not deſtitute neither of the inward Graces, was yet (as ſhe had Power) more intent upon what I may call the *Accommodations* and *Ornaments* of Religion, and to the Power of Godlineſs added the Splendor of the World: This being the firſt Chriſtian Church or State of Chriſtianity, in which that remarkable Propheſy was fulfill'd in Part. —— *The King's Daughter is all glorious within, her Cloathing is of wrought Gold.* *Pergamus* indeed began this *Cloathing* of Religion, but was ſtopt in her Deſign, and rendred unmeet for the Attempt, by the Religious Broils and Controverſies that divided and diſtracted her. It was an Honour and Privilege reſerv'd for more peaceful Times in the Church, and particularly for the laborious Church in *Thyatira* to carry on and finiſh the outward Building, and to be deckt at once with Spiritual Gifts and Temporal Grandeur. And Both doubtleſs, when they can be enjoy'd together, are highly

commendable

commendable and greatly desirable; though it may be necessary to Caution the weaker Christians, that the External Pomp do not draw off their Minds from *the Better Part*, and make them rest in the Form, and lose the Substance.

The Rebuke. V. 20. Notwithstanding *I have a few things* (or somewhat) *against thee, because thou sufferest that Woman* (or thy Wife) *Jezabel, who calls herself a Propheteſs, to teach and to seduce my Servants to commit Fornication, and to eat things Sacrificed unto Idols.* —— *Jezabel*, in the Figure, stands for a Patroness and Promoter of false and idolatrous Worship, and a Persecutor of the true Worshippers of God: And as such, is an Eminent Type of the *Woman that sits upon many Waters*, even the Church of *Rome*, who also calls herself a *Propheteſs*, that is, inspired, and lays claim to a Right which *Christ* never promised her, to a Privilege too big indeed for sinful Mortals, *viz.* to be the Infallible Judge of Controversy and Supreme Head of the Catholick Church. The *Jewish Jezabel* was a Heathen by Birth, of *Sidonian* Extraction, and when married to *Ahab*, introduced the Worship of *Baal* the Idol-God of the *Sidonians* among the Children of *Israel:* The *Christian Jezabel*, of a Heathenish Original too, has introduced the *Pagan* Idolatry into the *Christian* Worship; *Popery* being nothing else but *Paganism transform'd*,

form'd, and put into a Chriſtian Dreſs. The *old Jezabel* ſlew as many of the Prophets of the Lord, as ſhe could lay her Hands upon, and would have ſlain *Elijah* too, if God had had not wonderfully preſerv'd him. And 'tis owing to the ſame tender Care and Protection of Providence, that all the Proteſtant Paſtors have not been cut off by the *new Jezabel*: who is here more particularly condemn'd by Chriſt for *teaching and ſeducing his Servants to commit Fornication, and to eat things Sacrificed unto Idols.* This may be meant of *carnal* as well as *ſpiritual* Fornication; ſince this is tolerated, if not allow'd of in ſome Caſes by the *Papiſts*, and call'd a *Venial Sin*: Though in thoſe early Days, in the Dawnings of Popery, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that our Saviour's Rebuke regards principally, if not ſolely, the Introduction or firſt ſetting up of *ſpiritual* Fornication in the Church: which began to be practiſed not long after the *Roman* Biſhop was declared the *Supreme and Univerſal Biſhop* by an Imperial Conſtitution. The Invocation of Saints and Angels in both Parts of the Empire, crept in inſenſibly; and then follow'd the Worſhip of Images, which being the Height of Folly and Idolatry, was the laſt ſettled. This was done in the *Weſt* by Pope *John* VII, who in the year 705 ſet up Images in the Churches, and order'd that they ſhould be worſhip'd; upon which, Image-worſhip was ſoon ſpread throughout

throughout the Empire in the *East* as well as *West*.

It may not be amiſs here to take ſome brief Notice of the firſt Riſe and gradual Increaſe of this Image-worſhip in the Church. Images then at firſt were deſigned to be no other than the Deſcriptions and Pictures of *Virtues*; after that they came to be Repreſentations of *Perſons*, but then only of *Chriſt* in his Humanity, or of the *Saints*, and theſe modeſtly confin'd to Houſes, or profane Places, and not yet ſuffer'd in the Church. About 300 Years after this they found Entrance (though not without Oppoſition) into ſome Churches, but ſtill only for an *Hiſtorical Uſe*, to revive the Remembrance of paſt Tranſactions. After this, beſide the *Hiſtorical Uſe* to refreſh the Memory and inform the Underſtanding, they acquired alſo a *Rhetorical Uſe* to ſtir up Devotion: And *Gregory* the Great, though he did not approve of *worſhipping* of them, yet allow'd worſhipping *before* them. This Worſhipping *before* them, in the ſecond Council of *Nice* gain'd them the Honour, though not of *Adoration*, yet of *Veneration*; and this Veneration in the End by *Aquinas* and others, came to be interpreted *Adoration*. And this Notion and Uſe of them has continued in the Church of *Rome* ever ſince. *Behold* here, *how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth!* And if we trace every other Hereſy in that Church to its Fountain-Head, we may probably find

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it have ſprung Originally from ſome laudable, innocent, or indifferent Uſage in the Primitive Church, and paſſing through the corrupt Channels of ſucceeding Ages, came at laſt to aſſume that monſtrous Form it now bears. Or whatever may be ſaid of the Humane Underſtanding in this Reſpect, we are ſure that the Divine Knowledge of our Saviour enabled him to trace all theſe Myſteries of Iniquity *ab Ovo*, and to diſcover them in the Conception and Birth. Accordingly he repreſents himſelf in this Epiſtle as having *Eyes like unto a Flame of Fire*, and as *he that ſearcheth the Reins and the Heart*; i. e. as he that could diſcern the ſowing and firſt ſpringing of the *Tares* in his Church; and therefore foretels and gives Warning of them, and blames the faithful Biſhops and Paſtors of the Church in *Thyatira* for not duly regarding the firſt Appearances, and not ſtopping the Beginnings of theſe Corruptions; for Inſtance, for not vigorouſly oppoſing the inſolent Pretenſions of the Church of *Rome* in claiming a Supremacy over all other Churches, and for ſuffering her to ſeduce his faithful Servants by impoſing her Innovations in Doctrine and Worſhip upon them, eſpecially with regard to Spiritual Fornication or Idolatry, a Thing ſo odious and provoking in the Eyes of a Jealous God.

V. 21. *And I gave her ſpace to repent of her Fornication, and ſhe repented not.*——This

is ſpoken of *Jezabel*, or of the corrupt Church repreſented by her; and the Words ſeem to imply that *Chriſt*, in his own eternal Purpoſe, had fix'd and appointed a certain Time of Patience and Forbearance, to wait the Amendment and Reformation of this Idolatrous Church: which however he foreſaw they would abuſe, or neglect to improve. When this Time is paſt, her Judgment is come, and ſhe can no longer hope for Mercy. She has now continued, if we date the *Æra of Popery* from A. D. 606, 1127 Years; and how much longer the Divine Forbearance will ſpare her, is a Secret known only to God. However, ſhe has Reaſon to be alarm'd at every freſh War that breaks out, and to think herſelf in no little Danger.

The Threatning. V. 22, 23. *Behold, I will caſt her into a Bed, and them that commit Adultery with her into great Tribulation, except they repent of their Deeds. And I will kill her Children with Death, and all the Churches ſhall know that I am he which ſearcheth the Reins and Hearts: And I will give unto every One of You according to your Works.* —— The *Bed* is a Symbol either of a State of Sleep or *Inſenſibility*, and ſo may denote the Blindneſs and Infatuation of the Church of *Rome*, and her not knowing the Day of her Viſitation; which therefore will be the more dreadful and ſurpriſing, for coming ſudden and unexpected: Or elſe of a State of great *Tribulation*, there being a Bed

of *Sickneſs* as well as of Eaſe. To be *caſt* into this Bed, imports it to be ſuch a State as Men would not chuſe; and it muſt be a great Aggravation of Grief to be tormented in that where Men ſeek Reſt. The Caſe of the *Romaniſts*, when God viſits them, will be ſomething like that mention'd by the Pſalmiſt, *the Things that ſhould have been for their Wealth, will prove unto them an Occaſion of falling*; and as St. *James* farther obſerves, *be a Witneſs againſt them, and eat their Fleſh as it were Fire*. Their Pride and Luxury, their Tyranny and Cruelty, by which they have ſo remarkably diſtinguiſh'd themſelves, will haſten and prepare the Way for this heavy Judgment: The Dreadfulneſs, the Suddenneſs, and Completeneſs of which, we have deſcrib'd by the Prophets in the Old Teſtament, in the Fall of *Babylon*, and by St. *John* in the 17th and 18th Chapters of this Book; to which I refer the Reader, only obſerving, here two Things. 1. That when this great Event ſhall happen, then *all the Churches ſhall know that Chriſt is he which ſearcheth the Reins and the Heart*; i. e. who foreſaw and foretold theſe things, and even the very firſt Steps and Beginnings of that great Apoſtacy, which ſhould call down ſo terrible a Vengeance. And who, at that Time too, will very likely make as remarkable a Diſtinction between the faithful *Proteſtants*, and the Antichriſtian *Papiſts*, as he did formerly between the *Jews* and *Chriſtians* at the Deſtruction

of *Jeruſalem*; which he ſeems to intimate in theſe words, *I will give unto every one of you according to your Works* (or this may imply ſome Diſtinction to be made between the *more Moderate* in the *Romiſh* Communion, and the *Bigotted* Zealots.) But before this fatal Cataſtrophe, 'tis not impoſſible but that the Church or Court of *Rome* will be viſited with ſome leſſer Judgments, as Warnings or Preludiums of its approaching Diſſolution. 2. That in this Epiſtle there are two eminent *Types* of the Nature of the Deſtruction here foretold, and againſt what particular Church it is deſign'd. The firſt is *Jezabel*, who periſh'd miſerably, falling at once from the Height of Imperiouſneſs to the Depth of Ignominy and Wretchedneſs, being thrown out of a Window and eaten by Dogs; ſo that not only her Form, but her very Carcaſe was extinguiſh'd, there being no Remains left of her Body, but ſome few Tokens of the Certainty of her Death, the Skull, the Feet, and the Palms of her Hands, and her Blood ſpilt upon the Walls; ſo that none could ſay, *this is Jezabel*. And ſuch will be the Fate of that Proud City that now Lords it over the World. In one Hour her Judgment ſhall come, and ſhe ſhall be *found no more*. 3. The other Type is *Thyatira* itſelf, the Repreſentative here of the *Roman* Church, which has ſuffer'd a *total Ruin*, the moſt finiſh'd and complete of all the Seven Churches; there being not ſo much as the

Memory of the Town left, or any Monument that ſhews there has been ſuch a Town, but only ſome ſlender Remains of Inſcription hard to be found, like the Skull, Feet, Hands, and the Blood of *Jezabel*. A rueful Emblem of the final Exciſion of *Rome!*

The Exhortation. V. 24, 25. *But unto You I ſay the Reſt in Thyatira, as many as have not this Doctrine, and which have not known the Depths of Satan, as they ſpeak, I will put upon You none other Burden; but this, what ye have already, hold faſt till I come.* —— This Exhortation contains a moſt endearing Encouragement to the well-meaning Chriſtians in *Thyatira*; and is a lively Inſtance of the great Tenderneſs, Compaſſion, and Condeſcenſion of our Bleſſed Redeemer towards the Faithful in all Ages. For here he makes all reaſonable Abatements for the Iniquity of the Times, and the Frailty of Humane Nature; and requires no more, and will lay no more upon them, than the Times will bear. If they only take Care to abſtain from *Spiritual Fornication*, the Doctrine of *Jezabel*, and the Thing which he *more particularly hates*; and are not concern'd in the wicked Intrigues and Cabals of the Court of *Rome*, that aim at nothing elſe but raiſing and aggrandizing themſelves by all the pious Frauds, lying Miracles, bloody Perſecutions, and other abominable Methods (which the Aſſertors of them call the Depths of God and Religion, but are in Truth the

Depths

Depths of Satan.) If, I ſay, the Faithful in *Thyatira* would keep themſelves undefiled from theſe foul Blots and great Offences of the Church of *Rome*, *Chriſt* promiſes to put upon them no other Burden but this, *What ye have already, hold faſt till I come:* i. e. whatever the State of Religion was at that Time, whatever the faithful *Thyatirians* did then profeſs and practiſe, though it did not come up to the Purity and Perfection of the *Primitive Pattern*, or even equal what their *immediate* Fore-fathers had done before them, our Saviour here promiſes nevertheleſs to accept of and reward; and only requires them to hold faſt and perſevere in the ſame, without admitting or complying with the greater Abominations of the *Romaniſts*. Great Numbers of ſuch well-diſpoſed Men always have been (and eſpecially in thoſe early Days) in the Church of *Rome*, that were not tainted with, but rather bewail'd in ſecret, and would have been glad to reform (if it had been in their Power) the groſſer Errors and Corruptions of that Church. The Chriſtian World is beholden to many of theſe for their admirable Works of Piety and Devotion. Such are the Men at this Day, who groaning under the Tyranny and Bondage of the Court of *Rome*, which ſo corrupts their Church, wait for Deliverance from that Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God. Theſe are no Diſturbers of Chriſtian States and Kingdoms,

Kingdoms, no Flatterers of the Papal Chair, none of thoſe Sons of Pride and Bigotry, who are for damning and burning Hereticks; but Men of great Piety and Peaceableneſs, and endued with many excellent Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now to all ſuch of the *Romiſh* Communion as theſe, not only that lived in the *Thyatirian* State, but that ſhall live in any ſucceeding State to the World's End, our Saviour's Exhortation is plainly directed, and truly applicable: *What ye have already, hold faſt till I come*; i. e. till my Second Coming to judge the World, till near which the *Papal Uſurpation* will continue. And for their Encouragement to do ſo, here follows a glorious Promiſe.

The Promiſe. V. 26, 27, 28. *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my Works unto the End, to him will I give Power over the Nations: (And he ſhall rule them with a Rod of Iron; as the Veſſels of a Potter ſhall they be broken to ſhivers) even as I receiv'd of my Father: And I will give him the Morning-Star.* —— In theſe Words there are two diſtinct Promiſes, though dependant on one another: And Nothing can be more ſuitable and more encouraging than theſe Promiſes to the Pious and Moderate of the *Romiſh* Perſuaſion in all Ages, eſpecially during the firſt Advances of Popery in the *Thyatirian* State. For that which gave Birth to the Apoſtacy was a Deſire of *Supremacy*, and that which the *Romaniſts* in every Age have moſt

ſtrenuouſly

ſtrenuouſly contended for, is the *Papal* Supremacy, that is, in *Chriſt*'s Language, to have *Power over the Nations, and to rule them with a Rod of Iron.* Now our Saviour here ſeems ready to gratify their Ambition at a proper Seaſon, and to grant them the utmoſt of their Deſire upon certain Conditions, and that too in more direct and expreſs Terms than he did his Diſciples *James* and *John*, who deſired to ſit the One on his right Hand, and the other on his Left in his Kingdom. For he tells them plainly, that if they *overcome and keep his Works unto the End*, i. e. keep themſelves unſpotted from the great Corruptions of Popery, they ſhall have this *Power over the Nations*, and *rule them with a Rod of Iron, and break them to ſhivers like a Potter's Veſſel*; and that too as certainly and as fully (in due Proportion and Subordination) as he had *receiv'd* the ſame Power *from his Father.* A moſt extenſive and engaging Promiſe *ad Hominem*: which however they were not to hope for before the Commencement of the *Millennial State*, to which the latter Promiſe has a plain Reference.—*And I will give him the Morning-Star.*—— The *Morning-Star* is the Symbol of the firſt Reſurrection: *Chriſt* in the latter Part of the *Revelation* calls Himſelf the *Morning-Star*, as he roſe *before* the General Reſurrection, and as he was the *Firſt* that roſe from the Dead, never again to return to the Grave. And therefore the Promiſe of giving the *Morn-*

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ing-Star muſt imply, that thoſe who are entitled to it, ſhall riſe, as *Chriſt* did, before the General Reſurrection, and be Partakers of the firſt Reſurrection, in order to enjoy the *Millennial* State; which State, or Reign of the Saints upon Earth, as it is to be without Night, is frequently call'd *a Day*, or *the Day*, or *the great Day*, and the like; and the Beginning of it is well denoted by the *Morning-Star*, commonly ſo call'd from uſhering in the Day. The plain Meaning then of this and the other Promiſe, is, that the faithful *Thyatirians*, and all thoſe of the *Roman* Communion that hold faſt their Integrity in the midſt of an over-bearing Corruption, ſhall have a Part in the glorious Reign of the Saints upon Earth, from its very Beginning, and ſo during the whole Reign of a Thouſand Years, have Power or Dominion over the Nations.

The Monitory Concluſion.

V. 29. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.*——

i. e. It highly concerns every Chriſtian carefully to attend to what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches from this Time to the End of the World, as they will all from this Time be tainted more or leſs with the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*. 'Tis farther obſervable, that in the three firſt Epiſtles this Injunction goes before the Promiſe; but in this and the three laſt, the Promiſe before the Injunction: The Reaſon may be,

be, that the three firſt States of Chriſtianity were always in readineſs to obey, and forward of themſelves to perform whatever they knew to be their Duty, and therefore wanted but little Spur or Encouragement; but the latter, by the Degeneracy of the Times, ſtood in need likewiſe of ſome Promiſe, Motive, or Encouragement to excite 'em to a zealous Performance; and therefore the Promiſe of a peculirr Reward is placed before the Command.

CHAP. VI. *Ep.* V.

An Expoſition of Chriſt's *Epiſtle to the Church in* SARDIS.

Ch. iii. V. 1. *AND unto the Angel of the Church in Sardis write.*

The Meaning of the Word Sardis.

——SARDIS in *Syriac* ſignifies a *Shield*; which is a Piece of *defenſive* Armor, to cover and guard the Body againſt an Aſſault; and ſingly or by itſelf is only Sufficient to preſerve Life, or to ſecure a Man againſt a mortal Wound: And ſo fitly repreſents that almoſt univerſal Decay of Religion, that general Corruption of Manners, and that low State of Chriſtianity that ſucceeded the *Thyatirian*, and preceded the *Philadelphian*. For the Church in *Sardis* was wholly up-

on the Paſſive and *Defenſive*, having loſt, or laid aſide, or neglected to uſe the *Offenſive* Weapon, *viz. the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* She had *Faith* enough (which was her *Shield*, from whence ſhe is denominated) to quench ſome of the fiery Darts of the Wicked, but not enough to make Head againſt him or his Agents; to keep her from a total Apoſtacy, but not enough to produce a ſincere or univerſal Obedience; to ſupport the Profeſſion, but not to maintain the Power of Chriſtianity. Such was the forlorn Caſe, and melancholy State of the Church of *Chriſt* in that dark Age (call'd by Hiſtorians the *iron, leaden, obſcure Age)* in the Ninth and Tenth Century, and ſome that follow'd: For though after this, Learning in ſome Meaſure revived, yet Religion ſtill continued at a very low Ebb, till the Dawnings of that illuſtrious Day, which open'd and diſtinguiſh'd the *Philadelphian* State, began to appear in the zealous Oppoſers of the *Papal Uſurpation*, ſo particularly taken Notice of by our Saviour in this Epiſtle.

The long Duration of this Church.

Now this corrupt Church in *Sardis*, I ſuppoſe to have continued 600 Years, that is, from the Beginning of the Ninth to the End of the Fourteenth Century; ſo that this State of the Chriſtian Church was the longeſt as well as the

the darkeſt, and may not unfitly be term'd the *long Night of Chriſtianity.*

Chriſt's Title. Ibid. *Theſe things ſaith he that hath the ſeven Spirits of God, and the Seven Stars.* —— As the *Seven Stars* plainly denote the whole Body of Chriſtian Paſtors, *collectively* taken; ſo, by Parity of Reaſon, *ſeven Spirits of God* muſt ſignify all the ſeveral Orders of Angels under the Conduct and Direction of ſeven ſpecial Angels of greater Eminency than the Reſt, or ſuch as we thence ſtyle in one word *Archangels. Chriſt's having theſe* denotes his having *all Power in Heaven and in Earth*, that he is, in his Humane Nature, exalted far above the higheſt Orders of Angels in Heaven, and is the Head of all Church-Governors upon Earth; that the former are under his immediate Government, and wholly at his Command, being *miniſtring Spirits ſent forth to miniſter unto them that are Heirs of Salvation*; and that the latter are under his ſpecial Care, Cognizance, and Protection, and receive from him the Gifts of the Spirit to quicken and ſupport them in their Duty; and therefore they had no Reaſon to be afraid of any Danger, or to ſtop at any Difficulty, knowing who would be their Guide and Defender. The mention likewiſe of the *Seven* Stars to this Church may imply, that though ſhe was miſerarbly corrupt and degenerate, and drawn to the very Dregs, yet ſhe was

not the *laſt* Church or State of Chriſtianity that was to appear in the World, ſince there were *two* others ſtill to follow: And the mention of the *Seven* Spirits of God may alſo import, that *each* different State of the Church has a *particular* diſtinct Angel, even One of the ſeven chief Angels to preſide over it, to whoſe Care and Adminiſtration, in general, *Chriſt* has committed the Affairs of all the Churches.

The Reproof. Ibid. *I know thy Works, that thou haſt a Name, that thou liveſt, and art dead.*—— i. e. The Church in *Sardis* thought herſelf to be a ſound Part of *Chriſt*'s Church, but ſhe was miſtaken: ſhe was dead, while ſhe lived: ſhe had a Name to live, but as to all the Purpoſes of living, ſhe was as if ſhe had been dead. The Truth of this is abundantly clear from Hiſtory. The Chriſtians of that Age had miſerably perverted and polluted the pure Doctrines of the Goſpel, and their Manners were agreeable to their Doctrine. The corrupted Churchmen, and particular by the Church of *Rome*, were wholly intent upon acquiring Riches by all manner of baſe Ways and Impoſtures. And theſe Riches became the Cauſe of the Decay of Piety, and of horrid Luxury, which produced therein all manner of Cimes and Idolatries; and no Man could ſay any thing againſt the eſtabliſhed Corruptions without expoſing himſelf to Perſecutions.

cutions. The *Cruſades* likewiſe that commenced and were carri'ed on during this Period, under Peretence of recovering the *Holy Land*, brought an Inundation of Vice upon *Chriſtendom*, and involv'd the Church in a Deluge of Wickedneſs, in unheard-of Murders, Maſſacres, and abominable Impieties.

The Exhortation. V. 2, 3. *Be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. For I have not found thy Works perfect before God. Remember therefore what thou haſt receiv'd and heard, and hold faſt, and repent.*——The Angel of the Church in *Sardis* is here admoniſh'd to awaken from ſuch a ſupine lifeleſs State, and to ſtrengthen both himſelf and others, to ſtir up within him the Graces which were in Danger of being utterly extinguiſh'd, and to preſerve thoſe from the general Contagion that were not yet fal'n into the like enormous deadly Sins, but ready to fall, if not ſtrengthen'd with proper Advice and ſeaſonable Exhortation. For his Works, upon account of their not being accompanied with Sincerity, and not being agreeable to all the Rules of the Goſpel (the Generality of the Members of this Church contenting themſelves with obſerving ſome Rules of the Goſpel, and having no Regard to the Reſt) were not found to be compleat and perfect, but far otherwiſe, in the ſight of God. He is therefore directed to recollect and remember

after

after what manner he had at firſt embraced Chriſtianity, and after what manner the Doctrines thereof were committed to him, and to hold faſt, or adhere cloſely to the Rule of Faith and Manners he had been inſtructed in, and to repent of the Crimes he had been guilty of in his Deviations from it, and to call upon ſuch as were faulty to repent likewiſe.

The Threatning. V. 3. *If therefore thou ſhalt not watch, I will come on thee as a Thief, and thou ſhalt not know what Hour I will come upon thee.*—— i. e. If the Angel did not watch over himſelf and his Flock to correct and amend what they are before blamed for, *Chriſt* threatens that a very ſudden and ſevere Judgment ſhould overtake him; that he would come againſt him unawares, and ſurpriſe him in the deadly State he was in, at an Hour he knew not, even as a Thief comes in the dead Time of Night, when the Maſter and Family are faſt aſleep. Now the *Sardian* Paſtors and People not taking the Warning here given, but growing rather worſe and worſe, and proceeding at laſt even to Civil Wars among themſelves, this Threatning ſeems moſt evidently to have been fulfill'd by the Deſtruction of the *Greek* Church, or the Fall of the *Grecian* State at the Taking of *Conſtantinople* by *Mahomet* II. A. D. 1453. For it is to be noted, that the *Roman* Empire being diſmember'd by the Irruption of the

Barbarous

Barbarous Nations, the *Eaſtern* Empire from that Time had both the Name and kept up the Pretenſions of the antient *Roman* Empire. And therefore the Threatning being directed to the Chriſtians in thoſe Parts, or to that chief Part of *Chriſtendom*, was actually and exactly fulfill'd at the Time aforemention'd by the ſudden Conqueſt of *Mahomet* II, who with an Army of near four hundred thouſand Men took *Conſtantinople*; and from that Time went on conquering till he ruin'd all the Power of the *Eaſtern* Empire, in all the Parts thereof, and that ſo effectually, that not one Monarchy of thoſe Chriſtian Princes which formerly poſſeſs'd it, was excepted from the common Ruin; the *Ottomans* having gain'd (and ſtill enjoying) all the Dominions of the *Eaſtern Cæſars:* Though the laſt Breath of the Church in the *Eaſt* ſeems not to have been till about A. D. 1522, when *Rhodes* was taken by *Soliman.* And this happening juſt about the Time of the remarkable *Æra* of the *Philadelphian* State, we can't but admire and adore the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Divine Providence in ſo diſpoſing and conducting this great Event, that as the *Fall of the Jews* at firſt was the *Riches of the Gentiles*, ſo now the Ruin of the *Eaſtern* Church ſhould prove the Riſe of the *Weſtern.*

The particular Commendation.

V. 4. *Thou haſt a few Names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their Garments, and they ſhall*

ſhall walk with me in white; for they are Worthy. —— There can't well be a ſtronger Intimation of the wretched Degeneracy of a Church, than to ſay, that *even ſuch* a Church has a few Sound Members; which is the ſame as to ſay, that ſome good Men are to be found even in the worſt of Times. Who theſe few Names or Perſons in the *Sardian* Church were, we learn from Hiſtory, namely, the *Albigenſes* and *Waldenſes*, and others, the Oppoſers of the Papacy, againſt whom at laſt the *Cruſades*, or Holy Wars (as they call'd them) were levied, and of whom 'tis ſaid that near a Million of them were ſlain. Yet theſe were but few in Compariſon, conſidering the long Duration of this Period of the Church, the infinite Multitude of thoſe that were corrupted during this Period, or the vaſt Majority on the other ſide; even as few comparatively, as the *Seven thouſand Men in Iſrael*, that, during that grand Apoſtacy in the Reign of *Ahab*, had *not bowed their Knees unto Baal.* Theſe were the true *Primitive Proteſtants*, that ſtood the firſt Brunt of Popiſh Rage and Perſecution, that ſtruggled with ſo many Difficulties, and ſuſtain'd ſo many terrible Conflicts againſt Popery; to whom we are obliged for the firſt Dawnings of that glorious Reformation, which was the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Bleſſing of the following Age.

Who

Who the Predeceſſors and Succeſſors of the *Albigenſes* and *Waldenſes* were, we have this brief Account from the Editor of *Perrin*'s Hiſtory of theſe People.—As in the Vallies of *Piedmont*, the Primitive Chriſtianity was derived down to *Claudius* Arch Biſhop of *Turin*, who maintain'd the Purity of Doctrine in the Ninth Century againſt the Innovations of *Rome*, and who derived down the ſame to his Diſciples, and they to ſucceeding Generations to this Day: ſo in the Neighbouring Parts, in *France*, in the Eighth Century, the Purity of Chriſtianity, in Oppoſition to the Idolatry of the Church of *Rome*, was ſtrenuouſly maintain'd under *Charlemagn*; and from the Holy Men of that Age the Lamp of pure Doctrine was handed down to *Bertram*, from him to *Berengarius*, from him to *Peter Bruis*, from *Peter Bruis* to *Waldo*, from *Waldo* to *Dulcinus*, from him to *Marſilius*, from him to *Wickliff*, from him to *Hus* and *Jerom* of *Prague*, and from their Scholars, the *Fratres Bohemi*, to *Luther*. Theſe are ſome of the brave Chriſtian Heroes in that dark corrupt Age, in that moſt degenerate State of Chriſtianity, which is here denoted by the Church in SARDIS, *of whom the World was not Worthy*, but whom our Saviour pronounces (according to the gracious Terms of the Goſpel-Covenant) Worthy of the Reward he deſign'd for them, and bears this Teſtimony

to them, that they had *not defiled their Garments, viz.* with Popiſh Errors. The Purity of their Lives and Doctrines may be ſeen at large in the Hiſtory before-mentioned. The Reward promiſed them by *Chriſt*, ſhall be conſider'd under the next Particular.

The Promiſe. V. 4. *He that overcometh, the ſame ſhall be cloth'd in white Raiment, and I will not blot out his Name out of the Book of Life, but I will confeſs his Name before my Father, and before his Angels.*—As the Promiſe in this and every other Epiſtle is made to him only that *overcometh*, we are to conſider that the Chriſtian Warfare, like any other Warfare, is a Work of Time and Difficulty, and not to be finiſh'd all at once; in which too a Man may be foil'd and wounded, and yet recover and not be overcome: ſo long as he continues fighting, he is not conquer'd: He muſt quit the Field of Battle, be kill'd, or taken Priſoner, before he can be ſaid to be routed or vanquiſh'd. But the Chriſtian Warrior, has this Advantage above any other, that even the Loſs of Life ſhall not deprive him of the Crown of Victory; ſince a Man may be ſlain in this War, and yet come off more than Conqueror: For he is only required to be *faithful unto Death*, and then is ſure to obtain *a Crown of Life*. Now conſidering the fatal Degeneracy and overſpreading Corruption of the *Sardian* Age, we may reaſonably conclude that there

there were but few ſo righteous then, as not to ſtand in Need of Repentance, few that kept themſelves ſo untainted from the general Contagion, as not to have Occaſion to waſh their Garments; and therefore our Saviour, v. 3. calls upon the whole Church, both Paſtors and People to repent, and promiſes to them that do repent the ſame Reward as he promiſes to thoſe that had not defiled their Garments, that he *will not blot out their Name out of the Book of Life* on Account of any deadly Sin they had committed, but had now repented of, but would *confeſs their Name*, or own them for his true and faithful Diſciples before his Father and before his Angels; a moſt encouraging Promiſe and ſuitable Reward for their witneſſing a good Confeſſion before the World. Nor is this all; but he promiſes moreover that they ſhall *walk with him in White*, and be *cloath'd in white Raiment*; which is an Alluſion to an initiating Ceremony in Uſe among the *Jews*, when they admitted the Candidates for the Prieſthood into that Office, after they had examin'd and judg'd of their Fitneſs as to their Genealogy and Unblemiſhedneſs of Body, by putting on them a white Robe, and then receiving them into the Court of the Prieſts: ſo that the Words of this Promiſe taken together, import the ſame as St. *John* afterwards obſerves, that they ſhall be *Kings and Prieſts*

unto God, or have a ſhare in that *Royal Prieſthood*, which is to be the glorious and diſtinguiſhing Privilege of the *New Jeruſalem*: That Title which with too many is moſt Contemptible in this World, will be found moſt Honourable in the next. Their *Regal* Title is ſufficiently implied in the firſt Promiſe, that they ſhall *walk with Chriſt*, and their *Prieſtly* State in the latter, that they ſhall be *cloath'd in white Raiment*, which eminent Favour and Honour (ſo expreſſive of their Character) our Saviour tells Us, they had (in a manner) merited and acquired. *They ſhall walk with me in White, for they are Worthy.* Whereby our Lord ſhews his Readineſs to recognize the real Worth of his faithful Servants, the high Eſteem he has of all thoſe, who withſtand, the Torrent of bad Times, and are not borne down with the Overflowings of Ungodlineſs, and his ſingular Love and Regard for ſuch as Signalize themſelves in a Time of univerſal Corruption. We can give no other Reaſon why *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, are ſingled out from all the other Saints of the Old Teſtament as the greateſt Favourites of Heaven, or as the only Men whoſe Prayers had the greateſt Prevalence with God, but this, that they all lived in the moſt corrupt Times and Places, and preſerv'd their Integrity in the midſt of an abounding Iniquity. And ſuch was the Caſe of the Faithful in the

Church in *Sardis*, that lived like *Lot* in *Sodom*, yea, that were *burning* and *ſhining Lights* in the midſt of *Ægyptian* Darkneſs, of ſuch groſs Ignorance and Corruption, as had overſpread the Face of the Earth. Therefore *they ſhall walk with me in white*, ſays *Chriſt*, *for they are Worthy*.

The Monitory Concluſion.

V. 6. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.*——

i. e. Let the *preſent* Churches in the *Sardian* State carefully obſerve what is here promiſed to thoſe who *hold faſt their Integrity*, and *fight the good Fight of Faith*, that they may be encouraged and excited to the like Faithfulneſs and Perſeverance; and likewiſe what is threaten'd againſt the Wicked and Negligent, that they may awake in Time out of their Spiritual Slumber, and eſcape the Judgments that will at laſt overtake the corrupted and impenitent Chriſtians. And let ſucceeding Churches and *future* Generations regard in their Mind the Work of the Lord, and the Operations of his Hands in theſe and the like Caſes, leaſt they alſo periſh from the right Way, and *fall after the ſame Example of Unbelief*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII. *Ep.* VI.

An Expoſition of Chriſt's *Epiſtle to the Church in* PHILADELPHIA.

Ch. iii. V. 7. *AND to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia write.*

The ſixth Church, what the Name denotes.

—— PHILADELPHIA (according to the true Reading of the Word in the Original) ſignifies *Brotherly Love*; which is the proper diſtinguiſhing Character of that Body of Chriſtians which conſtitute the *Reformed Churches*, and more particularly of the ſound Members of the *Church of England*, ever juſtly eſteem'd the Bulwark and Ornament of the Reformation. *England* lies in the moſt temperate Part of the temperate Zone, and enjoys a Religion as temperate as the Climate itſelf; and as *Good-Nature* (the *true Characteriſtick* of her Natives) is noted to have ſuch a peculiar Senſe in the *Engliſh* Tongue, as can't eaſily or fully be expreſs'd in any other Language; ſo this happy Temper is, above all others, the moſt ſuitable to our common *Chriſtianity*, *which is not only the Beſt, but the Beſt-natured Inſtitution in the World.* By the *Church in Philadelphia* then I have ſufficient Reaſon (as will be ſeen hereafter) to underſtand the *Church of England*, though

though not exclusive of the other Reformed Churches; and by the *Church of England*, I understand, not any particular Members of it, who may be tempted, on some Occasions, to act contrary to their avowed Principles and Profession, but those in general who adhere stedfastly to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship, that has all along been professed and practised in our Church. And the Charity and *Moderation* of the *Church of England*, taken in this sense, has, I presume, been *made known unto All.* Or should she want the *Witness of Men*, she has here the *Witness of God* which is greater, having as full a Right, by the Testimony of our Saviour, to the Title of *Philadelphia*, which denotes in particular the *Love of our Brother* or Neighbour, as the Primitive Church had to that of *Ephesus*, which denotes *Love in general.*

The Commencement of the Philadelphian State.

The Remains of the *Grecian* Empire were scarce faln into the Hands of the *Ottomans*, before the *Reformation* began; which was one of the most illustrious Events that has happen'd since the Times of the Apostles: The Light of the Gospel, which had shone more or less from the Days of *Constantine* for 12 Centuries together in the *East*, being now, with the Addition of a brighter and purer Lustre, transferred to the *West*. This Reformation of Religion, or

Revival

Revival of Primitive Chriſtianity, was begun by *Luther* abroad, forwarded here, in one important Inſtance, by King *Henry* VIII, carried on with Vigour and Succeſs in the pious, but ſhort Reign of King *Edward* VI, and perfected and completed in the long and glorious Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*. *Luther* began to preach againſt the *Popiſh* Errors A. D. 1517, and within 50 Years after that, no leſs than Seven Kingdoms or States, and 24 Cities had receiv'd his Doctrine. The *Swiſs Cantons* receiv'd it A. D. 1531, *Sweeden* and *Denmark* about the Year 1537; in the Reign of King *Edward* VI, who came to the Crown A. D. 1547, the Reformation was eſtabliſh'd by Law in *England* and *Ireland*; *Scotland*, which was then, and long continued an independent and ſeparate Kingdom, had it eſtabliſhed A. D. 1567, and the *Netherlands* by A. D. 1579.

The Title of Chriſt. Ibid. *Theſe things ſaith he that is Holy, he that is True, he that hath the Key of David, he that openeth, and no Man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth and no Man openeth.* —— Every Title of *Chriſt* has relation to the particular State of the Church it is directed to: And the Title he here gives himſelf, is moſt exactly ſuited to the Circumſtances and Character of the Church in *Philadelphia*. 1. *He that is Holy, he that is True.* Holineſs and Truth are the Sum of the *Divine Perfections*, and conſtitute by

that *Image of God* which was at firſt ſtamp'd upon the Soul of *Man*, and is ſince renew'd by the Preaching of the Goſpel and Effuſion of the Spirit. And the former is here put before the latter, to ſignify perhaps that Truth is a neceſſary Conſequence of Holineſs, according to that of the Pſalmiſt, *the Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and his Covenant to make them know it*: But Holineſs is not always an Effect of Truth, ſince Men may, and too often do, *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*. Now *he that is Holy, he that is True*, i. e. Holineſs and Truth itſelf, delights to ſee and is ready to acknowledge this Image of his whereſoever he finds it; and by prefixing this Title to this Epiſtle does not obſcurely intimate, that this was the bleſſed Condition of the *Philadelphian* State, when *Truth ſprung out of the Earth, and Righteouſneſs looked down from Heaven*, when the pure Light of the Goſpel ſhone forth in the Lives of its Profeſſors, and made this Church a Praiſe upon Earth. Therefore is ſhe highly praiſed and greatly encouraged by her Saviour, and is the *only* Church beſide that in *Smyrna*, that ſtands free from all Blame. 2. *He that hath the Key of David*, i. e. the Power of *David*, as Prophet, and as King; *as Prophet*, to unlock the Womb of Futurity, and declare things to come, *as King*, to appoint whomſoever he pleaſed to rule his People, and defend his Church; and who is both able

and willing to beſtow upon his Vicegerents in the *Philadelphian* State as much Dignity, Riches, and Honour, and as great a Meaſure of Peace and Plenty, or of Victory and Succeſs, as ever was enjoy'd in the moſt flouriſhing Days of *David* and *Solomon*. 3. *He that openeth and no Man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth and no Man openeth.* i. e. who has the abſolute Diſpoſal of Times, Seaſons, and Events, in relation to Perſons, Families, and Kingdoms, and more eſpecially in relation to his Church; fixing or removing his Candleſtick whenſoever and whereſoever he pleaſe. Where he *opens a Door*, or favours the Preaching of his Word, there all the Enemies of it ſhall never be able to overthrow it: And where he *ſhuts*, or has determined, by way of Puniſhment, the Extinction of a Church or People, or withdraws the Light of the Goſpel from a Place, there Humane Attempts are in vain to eſtabliſh it.

The Commendation. V. 8. *I know thy works: Behold I have ſet before thee an open Door, and no Man can ſhut it. For thou haſt a little ſtrength* (or Hoſt) *and haſt kept my Word, and haſt not denied my Name.*—— In order to underſtand aright the Matters contain'd in theſe Epiſtles, we muſt carefully diſtinguiſh the ſeveral Parts and Periods of Time within each reſpective State of the Chriſtian Church; and not apply that to the whole which belongs only to a Part,

or

or that to one particular Part which belongs to another. The Neceſſity of this Diſtinction, will, in ſome meaſure, appear from the Explanation of this Verſe; which primarily relates to the firſt Opening of the Reformation by *Luther*; 2. To its Advancement in the Reign of King *Edward* VI; and 3. To the Zeal and Conſtancy of the Proteſtant Martyrs in the Days of Queen *Mary*. The firſt is contain'd in theſe Words, *I know thy Works, Behold I have ſet before thee an open Door, and no Man can ſhut it* —— *I know thy Works*, i. e. I know what thou art a doing, I know the Sincerity of thy Intentions, and the Zeal of thy Endeavours; nor am I only acquainted with, but fully approve of the Work thou haſt undertaken. *Behold, I have ſet before thee an open Door, and no Man can ſhut it.* This is no leſs true of the wonderful Succeſs and Progreſs of the Reformation, than of the firſt Planting and Propagating of Chriſtianity. 'Twas *Chriſt* that opened the Door both to the One and to the Other: And the Succeſs was anſwerable in both Caſes. *Luther* was the great Inſtrument in the Hands of Divine Providence to bring about the Reformation; and he no ſooner appear'd in this more than Humane Undertaking, wherein according to all outward Appearance he had been cruſh'd, but he was ſo favour'd of Heaven, that he met with the Aſſiſtance of Princes who encouraged him to proceed; and his

Followers met with the ſame Favour. He pretended to no Authority for the Proof of what he propoſed but the Word of God, which had been for many Ages taken from the greateſt Part of Chriſtians. With this *ſingle Weapon* he battered and pulled down the *vaſt Power* of the Popes, which had been a raiſing for above a thouſand Years by all the Arts of the moſt refined Politicks, Religious Crafts, and the Terrors of War; ſo that within a few Years the Idolatrous Practiſes of the Church of *Rome*, which had been univerſally ſettled, were extirpated and thrown out of many Countries, and the Reformed Religion eſtabliſh'd in their Room. A moſt wonderful and aſtoniſhing Event, and to be aſcrib'd only to him, who *openeth and no Man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth and no Man openeth!*

Among the *Natural* or Second Cauſes that may be ſuppoſed to have contributed to the Succeſs of this great Work, theſe three proved the moſt ſeaſonable and effectual, *viz.* the Revival of Learning about this Time, the Invention of the Art of Printing, and the Tranſlation of the Bible into the Vulgar Languages: By means of which, the Books that were publiſhed by *Luther* and his Followers were the more eaſily diſperſed, underſtood, and examined: And their marvellous and irreſiſtible Effect appear'd in a very ſhort Time. For from the very firſt preaching

ing of *Luther* and his Diſciples, ſome States began to ſide therewith; and within about ſixty years the Reformed Religion was ſettled and confirm'd by the Supreme Authority within ſeven Sovereign States or Kingdoms, as the Reigning Religion, or the Religion eſtabliſhed by Law. Such a mighty and great Revolution as this, had never happened ſince Men became Idolaters, and (if we underſtand the Prophecy in this Epiſtle as looking directly this way) it had as much of the Divine Influence as the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, or its Eſtabliſhment by Humane Laws. And truly that ſo many Countries in ſo ſhort a Space of Time ſhould wholly embrace the true Worſhip of God, ſo univerſally as it is done in the Proteſtant Countries by the Reformation, and continue ever ſince firm and unſhaken in the ſame, notwithſtanding all the prodigious Efforts of their Enemies to the contrary; this, I ſay, is undoubtedly the *Lord's Doing*, and ought to be *marvellous in our Eyes*. 2. The Advancement and Settlement of the Reformed Religion in *England*, during the Reign of King *Edward* VI, ſeems evidently implied in the following Words— *For thou haſt a little Strength* or Hoſt: For tho' this may be applied, in ſome ſenſe, to the Reformation carried on abroad; yet is it not ſo ſtrictly true of *all the Proteſtant Countries* taken Collectively, as of the *Church of England* Separately; which may

moſt

moſt properly be ſaid at that Time to have a *little Strength*, or a little Hoſt, even the firſt Reformers in King *Edward*'s Reign, that like the little Hoſt of *Gideon* did Wonders, and like them too with Lamps in their Hands (*viz.* the Lamps of Scripture and Antiquity) routed and confounded all the numerous Forces of the Enemy: Or, to uſe a more ſuitable Compariſon, the *Church of England* in her Infancy was like the firſt Chriſtian Church after our Lord's Aſcenſion, rais'd from as ſmall Beginnings, bleſſed with the like ſucceſs, and built upon the ſame number of Foundation-ſtones. For as That was planted and watered by the twelve Apoſtles; ſo was this begun and ſettled by the twelve Compilers of our Liturgy: For Biſhop *Day*, tho' join'd to the Committee, is by no Means to be reckon'd of that Number, ſince he not only refuſed to ſubſcribe to it, but vehemently oppoſed it, and continued a Bigotted Papiſt to the very laſt. Thus did this little Hoſt ſettle the great Work of Reformation in theſe Realms upon a firm Baſis, and compoſe a Liturgy or *Book of Common-prayer* for preſent and future Ages, that will continue, we truſt, till Time ſhall be no more, that is the Glory of the *Engliſh* Nation, and the Envy of Chriſtendom.

3. The Zeal and Conſtancy of the firſt *Engliſh* Reformers is thus recognized and commended by *Chriſt* —— *And haſt kept my Word*

Word, and haſt not denied my Name. For that this is to be underſtood of the Martyrs and Confeſſors in the Days of Queen *Mary*, when the Religion that was eſtabliſh'd in in the former Reign, was now under Perſecution, and the Liturgy ſeal'd and conſecrated by the Blood of its Compliers, there is little or no Room to doubt. And theſe bleſſed Proteſtant Heroes (of whom *Chriſt* here witneſſeth that they *kept his Word, and did not deny his Name*) appear by their Exemplary Courage and Conduct to be no ways inferior to the firſt Rank of Martyrs in the Primitive Church. But here there is no Need of Enlargement; Every One's Reading or Obſervation being abundantly ſufficient to confirm the Truth of the Correſpondency between the Prediction and the Event.

A peculiar Temporal Promiſe to this Church.

V. 9. *Behold, I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan, which ſay they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come, and worſhip before thy Feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*——The Facts anſwering this Prophecy, bring us within View of our own Times, and will be found to reach near as far as the Concluſion of the laſt Peace. And therefore a few general Hints will here be ſufficient. The main Queſtion is, upon what Body of Men we are to fix the heavy Charge of being of the *Synagogue of Satan.* But the

the Reſolution of this is eaſy and obvious. For 1. I may without Scruple and with the greateſt Juſtice aſſert, That this Denomination properly belongs to all thoſe *Roman Catholicks* in particular, who have been plotting againſt the Lives of our Princes and attempting the Overthrow of our Conſtitution ever ſince the firſt Eſtabliſhment of the bleſſed Reformation. For that cruel Doctrine which maintains the Lawfulneſs of extirpating Hereticks out of Zeal to Mother-Church, we may infallibly conclude is no other than the *Doctrine of Devils*, and could proceed from no other Spirit, but him who firſt taught Rebellion in Heaven, and has been a *Murderer from the Beginning*. 2. We may affirm, that this Imputation is with equal Juſtice chargeable on that helliſh Combination of Fanatical and Republican Spirits, who bound themſelves by a ſolemn League and Covenant to deſtroy Root and Branch, that is, to murder their King and his Family, and utterly aboliſh Monarchy and Epiſcopacy; for theſe were as far from being true Proteſtants, as they were from being true Subjects; having ſhewn themſelves by their horrid and execrable Deeds to belong of Right to no other Society, than the *Synagogue of Satan*. They call'd themſelves *Jews*, that is, the true People of God, but were found *Liars*. Now our Saviour's Promiſe to the true *Philadelphians* that he would bring

bring theſe falſe Chriſtians and blood-thirſty Enemies under their Feet, and make them *know* that he loved them, was remarkably fulfil'd in four ſignal Inſtances, to mention no more at preſent. 1. In the Reign of our Immortal *Virgin* Queen, when the formidable, and to all humane Appearance invincible *Spaniſh Armada* was ſent againſt the *Engliſh* Navy and Nation: But he who giveth Victory and Salvation unto Kings, by Thunder and Tempeſt fought for us, and baffled the whole Power of *Spain*, and made them ſenſible with a Vengeance, that God was on our Side: As the King of *Spain* himſelf confeſs'd in thoſe memorable Words, that *he ſent his Fleet to fight againſt Men, and not againſt God*; thereby confirming in Part the Truth of our Saviour's Promiſe and Prediction, that God was the Queen's and her People's Protector, and that their Enemies ſhould *know* that he loved them. 2. In the Beginning of the next Reign we meet with the unparallel'd Gunpowder-Plot to deſtroy the Church at one Blow; as if the Papiſts had deſign'd to revenge themſelves, not only upon the Nation, but even upon God himſelf, for the former Defeat and Diſappointment. But this dark and daring Attempt was likewiſe in the critical Inſtant miraculouſly diſcover'd, and ſtifled in the Birth, that all the World again might ſee and *know* that God was our Saviour and mighty De-

liverer. 3. The Reſtoration of the Regal Family, after the long fanatical Uſurpation, was another Miraculous Demonſtration, in the View of all the World, of God's tranſcendant Mercy, Love, and Graciouſneſs to-towards this Church and Nation. 4. The many ſignal and repeated Victories and Succeſſes vouchſafed to our Renowned *Widow* Queen againſt the united Force and aſpiring Power of *France* and *Spain*, do plainly make up one Part of the Accompliſhment of this Prophecy. Heaven brought down the *French* King upon his Knees. He bowed and worſhipped before the Feet of our pious Sovereign. At the ſame Time that the Victorious Arms of the Confederates had reduced him to great Extremity, his People were viſited with a Famine. We ſaw then this haughty Monarch humbly ſupplicating for Peace, and diſpoſed to grant Us every thing that we could with Reaſon or Modeſty demand. And never, during the whole Courſe of the War, was there a fairer Proſpect, or more favourable Opportunity of procuring a glorious and laſting Peace, than at the Treaty of *Gertruydenburg*. But when inſtead of conſulting our own Honour and Intereſt, we ſeem'd rather inclin'd to mock and inſult, we rais'd our Enemy and ſunk ourſelves. That one ungenerous Article (ſo unbecoming the *Engliſh* Nation) that was to oblige the *French* King to turn his own Arms to drive

drive his Grandſon out of *Spain*, ſeem'd to be reſented by God as well as Man. For after this the Succeſs of the *Engliſh* Arms viſibly began to decline; Yea, after this came the fatal Battle of *Almanza*, &c. And no wonder if Providence denied Us at laſt what we might call an Honourable and Advantagious Peace, when we had ourſelves, at the moſt ſeaſonable and inviting Juncture, refuſed the Offer of a Peace, upon whatever Terms we pleas'd, within the Bounds of natural Juſtice and common Decency. But this only by the way. In general we know that the Reign of this Religious Queen was crown'd with Victory and Succeſs; that ſhe had the Hearts of her Subjects at Home, and triumph'd over her Enemies abroad. Which was a Demonſtration *ad Hominem* that ſhe and her People were under the Favour and Protection of Heaven, and is mention'd here as ſuch, *and they ſhall know that I have loved thee*, as if our Saviour had deſign'd to convince or to confound the Papiſts by their own Argument, ſince they make *Succeſs* and *Proſperity* to be one of the *Notes* of the true Church.

Another peculiar Promiſe to the Suffering Members of this Church.

V. 10. *Becauſe thou haſt kept the Word of my Patience, I alſo will keep thee from the Hour of Temptation, which ſhall come upon all the World, to try them that dwell upon the Earth.* —— Though this is ſpoken to

the *Philadelphians* in general, yet does it more particularly reſpect the perſecuted Proteſtants in the *Marian Days*, and the legal ſufferers during the *Grand Rebellion*: Both which in the ſtricteſt Senſe and in the higheſt Manner, having kept the Word of *Chriſt*'s Patience, that is, conform'd to the Precept and Example of *Chriſt* in ſuffering patiently, and even reſiſting unto Blood, became entitled to the following Promiſe, which is in general to take them away from the Evil to come; and is much the ſame with that made to good King *Joſiah*, that he ſhould be *gather'd into his Grave in Peace*, and that his *Eyes ſhould not ſee all the Evil which God* was about to *bring upon Jeruſalem*. For though theſe faithful *Philadelphians* endured great Sufferings, yet they are aſſured they ſhall eſcape much greater. *A Time* there is among the ſecret Stores of Providence, that, whenever it comes, will bring upon Mankind a Judgment as ſudden and ſurpriſing, as that which overwhelm'd the Old World. A Time there is mention'd by the Pſalmiſt, when God *may be found*, and a Time of great Water-floods when there will be *no coming nigh him*. A Time, wherein *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, if they were living, would be able to deliver but their own Souls. This Time is here call'd the *Hour* of Temptation, which denoting a very ſmall Space or Portion of Time, is moſt properly referred to the great

Antichriſtian

Antichriſtian Perſecution, which, as it will be moſt violent, ſo is to be very ſhort: For ſo our Lord has promiſed, that *for the Elect's Sake thoſe Days ſhall be ſhortened.* Beſides, there are other Expreſſions here, that plainly fix and determine it to this fatal Period. For 'tis call'd likewiſe the Hour of *Temptation*; which will conſiſt not only of grievous Afflictions, Oppreſſions, and Calamities, but of what the Word more properly ſignifies, Temptation to Sin, Temptation to Infidelity, Temptation to Idolatry, and all manner of Wickedneſs. For then *Iniquity will abound*, then will appear, in the moſt literal Senſe and barefaced manner, *the Overflowings of Ungodlineſs*; then will there be found but little Faith upon Earth; then will the *Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*; yea, then will there be a great ſcarcity of good Men; becauſe God, according to his Promiſe to the Church in *Philadelphia* will take them to himſelf beforehand; and leave but few of the Righteous in Compariſon to undergo this fiery Trial: which, that it refers to the Perſecution under *Antichriſt*, is farther manifeſt from its being *Univerſal:* For 'tis ſaid to *come upon all the World to try them that dwell on the Earth.* Not but that we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that theſe Words do point likewiſe at ſome leſſer Evils or Trials that will happen in the *Laodicean* State, as preparatory to thoſe greater Ones in the *Antichriſtian.*

chriſtian. Theſe may be more Perſonal and Particular, and reach and affect only or chiefly the inner Man; whereas the other being the Conſummation of the Curſe, and the laſt and utmoſt Efforts of the Power and Policy of the Kingdom of Darkneſs, will be totally and univerſally felt, and extend to all Parts of the World, and to every Faculty of Man, in which he is capable of being tempted or tormented.

Happy therefore, thrice happy are thoſe Righteous Souls, our pious Forefathers, the true *Philadelphians*, who are taken away from the Danger, and from the very Apprehenſion of theſe huge formidable Evils that are coming *upon all the World to try them that dwell upon the Earth.*

V. 11. *Behold I come quickly.* —— By theſe Words we are to underſtand *Chriſt's ſecond Coming*, and that this ſecond Coming of his will not be long after the *Philadelphian* State: And this farther confirms what I obſerv'd above, as to the Application of the preceding Paſſage. For the firſt great End of his ſecond Advent is to deſtroy *Antichriſt*, and to put an End to the *Antichriſtian* State. But he will come in *Judgment*, before he appears in *Perſon.*

Ibid. *Hold that faſt which thou haſt, that no Man take thy Crown.* —— If we may ſuppoſe this to relate to any one particular Perſon more than Others, our Thoughts muſt immediately

immediately be fixt upon that great Luminary or Chief Angel in the Church in *Philadelphia*, the Bleſſed Martyr of Forty-Eight; who is here commended for his zealous and noble Defence of the Chriſtian Cauſe, and exhorted to perſevere and hold faſt his Integrity, that he loſe not the *Crown of Martyrdom*, which no one with more Honour or greater Difficulty obtain'd. Let me only obſerve farther, that this Expreſſion, *that no Man take thy Crown*, ſeems to imply both the Poſſibility of falling from Grace, and the Impoſſibility of defeating thereby the Decrees of Heaven; in other Words, that if One fall away, Another ſhall be choſen in his Room to fill up the Number of God's Elect, or that the Freedom of Man's Will to Evil ſhall not vacate the eternal Purpoſe, or make the Calling of God of none Effect.

The General Promiſe.

V. 12. *Him that overcometh, will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God; and he ſhall go no more out. And I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the Name of the City of my God, which is New Jeruſalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my New Name.*—— *Chriſt* here repreſents himſelf, as he does in the Beginning of the *Revelation*, as acting in his *Mediatorial Capacity*, or glorified Humanity; and ſo will continue to act *till all*

things ſhall be ſubdued unto him, and *God* ſhall be *All in All*; and therefore there is in this one Paſſage ſuch frequent Mention of *my God*, according to what he declared to ſome of his Diſciples after his Reſurrection (whom he was *not aſhamed* even then *to call his Brethren*) *I aſcend unto my Father and to your Father, and to my God and your God.* The Words contain two eminent Promiſes in general, the One to give *him that overcometh* the Enjoyment of an high Privilege, the other to ſecure to him that Enjoyment. The firſt is implied in theſe Words, *I will make him a Pillar in the Temple of my God, and he ſhall go no more out*; i. e. whereas many ſound Members of the Church in *Philadelphia*, have, for their Zeal and Conſtancy in my Service, been driven from Place to Place, and deprived by Death or Perſecution of the Benefit and Privilege of Church-Communion in this Life; upon their Admiſſion into the *Heavenly Jeruſalem*, they ſhall continue *Pillars* or chief Governors there, as long as that bleſſed State ſhall laſt. 2. The other Promiſe I may call *Chriſt's Teſtimonial* or Title-to the faithful *Philadelphian*; whereby he is fully aſſured of, and may lay claim to, the foregoing Promiſe: For the better Underſtanding the Meaning of which, we may conſider, that as good Chriſtians go out of this World with a greater or leſſer Degree of Hope, with a ſtronger

or

or weaker Aſſurance of a bliſsful Immortality; ſo we have Grounds to think that there are likewiſe different Degrees of Hope and Aſſurance in the *Middle State*, or the State between Death and the Reſurrection; in which the Faithful departed enjoy indeed, in general, a comfortable Aſſurance and joyful Expectation of their perfect Conſummation and Bliſs both in Body and Soul. But the particular Nature, Meaſure, and Degree of Happineſs allotted for each, is what we may well ſuppoſe them to be for the moſt Part ignorant of; according to the Account our Saviour himſelf gives us in relation to his Method of Proceeding in the Day of Judgment; when he will ſay to the Righteous, *Come ye bleſſed of My Father —— for I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat*; at which ſome of them are repreſented as making Anſwer with a pleaſing Surpriſe, *Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungred, and fed thee?* But now *Chriſt* ſeems to promiſe the true *Philadelphians*, that all this Ignorance, Doubtfulneſs, or Uncertainty ſhall be wholly, in a manner, removed from them; that he will give them a Ticket or ſure Title to the glorious Privilege of entring the *New Jeruſalem*, and conſequently of being Partakers of the firſt Reſurrection; which I take to be the true Meaning of the following Expreſſions. —— *And I will write upon him the Name of my God*; i. e. He ſhall have upon

on his Face or in his Hand, or in his Keeping, ſome peculiar Mark to diſtinguiſh him for a true Son of God: ſo he ſhall know himſelf to be, and ſo he ſhall be call'd and eſteem'd by Others; and as ſuch ſhall *reign with Chriſt*, or be Heir of his Kingdom. — *And I will write upon him — the Name of the City of my God, which is New Jeruſalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from my God.* i. e. He ſhall have beforehand an Aſſurance of being a Fellow-Citizen with the Saints, a ſure Title to a Freedom in *the City of God*, to be a priviledg'd Inhabitant in the *New Jeruſalem*, which is to be erected by the immediate Power of God, and is particularly deſcrib'd in the 21ſt Chapter of this Book, and may be underſtood in a literal Senſe. —— *And I will write upon him my New Name*; i. e. My Name ſhall be upon his Forehead, as 'tis expreſsly ſaid in the laſt Chapter. *My New Name*, muſt, I conceive, be the Title of *King*, perhaps that which he wears himſelf upon his Veſture and upon his Thigh, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. For this *Revelation* being made to St. *John* not till after his Aſcenſion, that is, not till his Inveſtiture in his Regal State, nothing *before* that could properly be call'd *New*. Now in the *Millennial* State, or *Chriſt*'s Reign with his Saints a Thouſand Years, ſome will be, as it were, his *Courtiers*, and Others only his *Subjects*; ſo that this Promiſe of writing his New

Name

Name upon them, which is made only to this Church, and to that in *Pergamus*, ſeems ſomewhat peculiar and diſtinguiſhing; and may probably imply, that as thoſe two Churches moſt clearly explain'd, and moſt ſtrenuouſly contended for the Doctrine of *Chriſt*'s *Divinity*; ſo they ſhall, in their Reward, be diſtinguiſh'd accordingly. For *them that Honour me, I will Honour.*

The Monitory Concluſion. V. 13. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* i. e. Let him hear and conſider the great Motives and Encouragements given by the Spirit in every Epiſtle to Faithfulneſs and Perſeverance, the Admonitions to the preſent Members, and the Warnings of approaching Danger to thoſe that ſucceed.

Before we come to the *Laodicean Age*, we will here make a Stand, and look back a little upon the Ground we have travelled, and the large Tract of Time we have ſurveyed: And upon the ſlighteſt Review, we can't but obſerve the wonderful Chain of Providences and Events, their mutual Connexion and Dependance, their regular ſucceſſive Order, and their exact Correſpondence and Conformity to the Prophetical Deſcription, not only in the main Subſtance, or with reſpect to the general Character of each diſtinct Church or State of Chriſtianity, but even

in the minuteſt Circumſtances, as the *Names* of the ſeveral Churches, the *Order* of Succeſſion, the peculiar *Promiſe* given to each, and the different *Title* of *Chriſt* prefixed to every Epiſtle. Other Prophecies in Old or New Teſtament point at one certain determinate Period of Time for their reſpective Accompliſhments; but this is one continued Chain of Prophecies, that includes a long Series of Events, and takes in a vaſt Compaſs of Time: And, conſidering the admirable Harmony of the Whole and of the ſeveral Parts, the perfect and punctual Agreement, in every reſpect, between the Predictions and the Events, the Copiouſneſs of the Subject, or the Variety of Matter contain'd in theſe Epiſtles, which treat of the Affairs of all the Chriſtian Churches from the *Apoſtolick Age* to the *Antichriſtian State*, and the Extent or Duration of the Time, including no leſs than Sixteen Centuries ſucceſſively; we can't but look upon *this Prophecy* as the moſt *illuſtrious*, the moſt *perſpicuous*, and the moſt *comprehenſive* of any to be met with in the whole Book of God.

As a proper Introduction to the following State, I ſhall here juſt obſerve the Parallels or Oppoſitions between the ſeveral Churches; as, 1. Of *Thyatira* to *Epheſus*; the firſt is blamed for *ſuffering Jezabel*, the laſt commended for *not enduring thoſe that are evil*; the former commended for her *laſt Works*, the

the latter blamed for abating her *firſt Love*. 2. Of *Sardis* to *Smyrna*; the laſt commended without Reproof, the firſt reproved without any one particular Commendation. 3. *Philadelphia* is parallel to *Pergamus* in the Title, as to *Chriſt*'s Regality, in the Reward of Martyrdom, in her Eminence, and in the Subjection of her Enemies. *Laodicea* ſeems to ſtand alone, without Parallel or Oppoſition, unleſs it be to all the Churches before-named, which had all ſome Things or Perſons commendable in them; but this has none worthy our Saviour's Prophetical Regard. All that can be infer'd, is that the Sufferers in thoſe Days are moſt in Favour with God, according to *Chriſt*'s expreſs Declaration to the *Laodiceans*. —— *As many as I love I rebuke and chaſten.* 1. *Laodicea* is oppoſite to *Epheſus*, as having neither the *firſt* nor the *laſt* Love of that Church; which *laſt* Love, though ſomewhat abated and leſs fervent than the former, was not arrived to a Degree of *Lukewarmneſs*. Beſides the Church in *Epheſus* could not bear them that are evil, whereas a general Toleration or Sufferance of Evil is the very Thing that fixes the Imputation of *Lukewarmneſs* upon the *Laodiceans*. 2. 'Tis oppoſite to *Smyrna*, which had an *Appearance* of Poverty when it was really rich; whereas *Laodicea* is repreſented as rich in Appearance and Conceit, but in Truth and *Reality* miſerably poor. 3. To

Per-

Pergamus, as it takes no Care to hold faſt the Name of *Chriſt*, and not to deny his Faith, which Multitudes in theſe Days have Apoſtatized from; and 'tis to be fear'd that there are, *as yet*, but few in Compariſon prepared to be Martyrs or Confeſſors of their Religion. 4. To *Thyatira*, as having but little to ſhew now (beſides what our *Anceſtors* have left us) of the *Charity*, and *Service*, and *Faith*, and *Patience* of the *Thyatirians*. Nor, 5. Can *Laodicea* yet pretend to vie even with the corrupt Church of *Sardis*, in which there were a *few Names*, who *had not defiled their Garments*, and are declared *worthy* of a Reward. But in *Laodicea*, as if, according to *Iſaiah*'s Account of the *Jewiſh* Church, there was *no whole Part in it*, the State of Chriſtianity is here repreſented as labouring under an almoſt univerſal Darkneſs and Corruption. Much leſs, 6. Can *Laodicea* be compared to *Philadelphia*, from which it is, in a manner, totally declined and degenerate.

CHAP. VIII. *Ep.* VII.

Ch. iii. v. 14. *AND to the Angel of the Church in* LAODICEA *write.*——*Laodicea* implies, *as to Principle*, that impious abſurd Doctrine, that all Government is derived not from

The Name of the 7th or laſt Church explain'd.

from God, but from the People; and ſignifies, *as to Practice*, the Ruling of the People, or a general Riſing up againſt Authority; when the *Vox Populi* is become not only noiſy and querulous, but dictating and imperious; when even *Chriſtians* begin to Unlearn the Duty of Subjection, and to throw off all Reſpect and Reverence for their Governors. A Character that ſuits no Age more than the Preſent: The loud popular Clamour for *Liberty* in theſe Days, when Men are almoſt *ſurfeited* with it, is juſt like the Noiſe of *Drunkards*, who are then obſerv'd to be moſt greedy and quarrelſome after Drink, when they have leaſt need of it, and have indeed no Reaſon in the World for drinking any more, but that they have drank too much already: Or like the Murmuring of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, who, when they had *Manna* to the full, long'd for the *Fleſh-pots of Ægypt*; and God in Judgment, not in Mercy, gave them their Heart's Deſire; *he gave them Quails to eat*, and eat they did till the Meat *came out at their Noſtrils*; and what they deſired to pleaſe their Appetite, proved their Deſtruction: For *while the Meat was yet in their Mouths, 'ere it was chew'd, the Wrath of God came upon them, and ſlew the Wealthieſt of them.* May This never be *our* Caſe! Though ſome People ſeem reſolv'd never to leave off their Cries for *Liberty*, till they have obtain'd an abſolute univerſal

verſal Indulgence, *that Every One may do what is right in his own Eyes*, that is, till there be *no King in Iſrael.*

To confirm this Character of the preſent Age, I ſhall here produce the Teſtimony of a learned Foreigner from the celebrated Oration before a judicious and auguſt Aſſembly.——*Dum quidam Servituti ſe tantum Subducere velle profitentur, Confuſionem et Licentiam ubique diſſeminant. Religionem vellent abſque Miniſtris, Societatem ſine Præpoſitis, Leges ſine Obedientiâ, Regulas ſine Praxi. Auctoritas omnis pro Tyrannide, Diſciplina pro Servitute, Ceremoniæ et uſus pro totidem Superſtitionibus æſtimantur. Liberum ſe non putat hoc hominium genus, niſi omnem Superiorum et Legum Auctoritatem abjiciant.*——The Author in theſe Words ſeems to point only at the Modern Sett of *Freethinkers*; but alas! the Infection is ſpread much farther, and the Diſeaſe is become Epidemical. And if we add to this the other diſtinguiſhing Characteriſtick of the *Laodicean Age, viz.* that of *Lukewarmneſs*, or a ſteupid Indifferency and Unconcernedneſs in Matters of Religion, we ſhall find but few Places uninfected with One or other. *Gallioniſm* has been openly defended, and the *Deiſtical* and *Republican* Principles have long ago taken a deep Root in this Nation, and are now ſhooting forth their deadly Branches. The only remains almoſt now-a-days of Primitive Zeal,

and

and of Antient Diſcipline and Government, are to be found in our two *famous Univerſities*. Theſe Fountains ſtill run pure and clear, tho' the Streams that iſſue from them are too often corrupted: And indeed we no ſooner quit theſe renowned Seats of ſolid Learning, true Religion, and uſeful Diſcipline, but we come into an infected Air; and happy, thrice happy they, that after this, eſcape the general Contagion, that maintain their Conſtancy and hold faſt their Integrity in the midſt of ſo much Licentiouſneſs and Lukewarmneſs.

The Commencement of the Laodicean State.

It may be too invidious a Taſk to preſume to determine the exact Commencement of the *Laodiceam Age*; though I can't forbear mentioning one *notable Æra*, from whence we may reaſonably date the gradual Decline and Decay of Authority both in Church and State: I mean the Time when the moſt Venerable Aſſembly in the Chriſtian World began to remit and ſlacken the Reins of Diſcipline in a Caſe that is too well known to need any Enlargement. For when Complaint was brought before them againſt a learned and ſubtle Reviver of *Arianiſm*; by their dilatory Proceedings on that Occaſion, they gave the Party Accuſed an Opportunity to ſecure an Intereſt, —— and at length he was ſuffer'd to eſcape without any other Cenſure or Puniſhment, than that of

being Prohibited to write any more on the Subject of the Trinity, and of ſigning a formal Recantation artfully framed and drawn up by himſelf; and ſo was permitted to enjoy his Benefice during Life, and to propagate his Hereſy without Controul. The Effects and Conſequences of which Criminal Indulgence and fatal Partiality, are ſadly felt at this Day: But to paſs by theſe at preſent, let it only be noted that 'tis a Rule of Equity which God ſeems invariably to obſerve in his Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments in this World.—— *Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*

Chriſt's Title to this Church.

Ibid. *Theſe Things ſaith the Amen, the faithful and true Witneſs, the Begining of the Creation of God.*——

This Title, as addreſs'd to the *Laodiceans*, ſeems intended for a *Warning*, for *Example*, and for *Encouragement*. For this being the *Laſt* State of Chriſtianity that is to appear or make any Figure in the World (ſince 'tis to be ſucceeded by no other but the *Antichriſtian*) our Saviour, agreeably hereto, ſtyles himſelf, in the firſt Place, *the Amen*; that is, that as he is the Firſt, ſo he is the Final Cauſe, the End and Conſummation of all things, in whom the Myſtery of God both commenced and will be compleated, *in whom all the Praomiſes of God are Yea and Amen*, who

who is the Founder both of the Old and New World, the Author of the ſpiritual as well as material Creation, *the Beginner and Finiſher of the Faith*, τῆς πίστως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν. By this Title then Chriſt tacitly admoniſhes the *Laodiceans* that *the Time is ſhort*, and *the Day is at hand*; and therefore that if they will enter into Life, they muſt haſten their Preparations for it, awake out of Sleep, reſume their Courage, and rekindle their Zeal. To which End he propoſes himſelf as a Pattern to them, by calling himſelf, in the next Place, *the faithful and true Witneſs*; intimating thereby, that he lived in as corrupt and degenerate Times as they can do, and yet, notwithſtanding that, *witneſſed a good Confeſſion before Pontius Pilate*, declaring in his Preſence, when examined before him, that *for this End was he born, and for this Cauſe came he into the World, that he ſhould bear Witneſs to the Truth.* With him was not *Yea and Nay*, no Trimming or Tergiverſation, no Halting between contrary Opinions or Practices, no *Lukewarmneſs* or Indifference, no Fainting or Cowardice; but what he preach'd in his Life, he confirm'd in his Death. This is *the faithful and true Witneſs*, whoſe Cauſe we are to plead, and whoſe Example we ought to follow; and that none may be diſcouraged from following it in theſe Days, he ſtyles himſelf in the laſt Place, *the Beginning of the Creation of*

God; that is, that as he form'd Man at firſt out of the Duſt of the Earth, and breath'd into him the Breath of Life, and will raiſe him again from the Duſt to a New and Better Life; ſo he can even now quicken thoſe that are dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, renew them again to Repentance, and raiſe up to himſelf a peculiar Generation of ſound and ſincere Believers, to be his Witneſſes in the latter Days, to oppoſe the dreadful Progreſs of *Antichriſtianiſm*, and to *fight the Lord's Battels*. And this he ſeems ready, and even promiſes to effect, as will be ſeen hereafter. I only note here, that Theſe (whenever call'd) are undoubtedly the Perſons pointed at and repreſented by the *Labourers* in the Parable, that were *hired about the Eleventh Hour*; who, though not call'd till the laſt Age of the World, and perhaps not till the latter Stage of their Life, ſhall (if they prove faithful and endure unto the End) be equally rewarded with thoſe that have *borne the Burden and Heat of the Day*.

The Rebuke and Threatening.

V. 15, 16. *I know thy Works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot: So then becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my Mouth.* —— *Chriſt's* Complaint or Character of the *Laodiceans*, is, that they are *neither cold nor hot*, but made up of a ſtrange odd Mixture partaking of both, which we call *lukewarm*;

lukewarm; by which is meant a middle State between Profaneſs and Piety, when Men have Religion enough to keep them *eaſy*, but not enough to make them *ſafe*; when they can't be content without *ſome* Religion, but can be content with a very *little:* when their Affections are divided between God and the World, and they beſtow their cooler Affections upon God's Service, but reſerve the warmer for worldly Purſuits. But *I would*, ſays *Chriſt*, *that thou wert either cold or hot*, that is, that thou would'ſt either lay aſide all Pretences to Religion, or that thou would'ſt be Religious in good Earneſt; that thou would'ſt ſhew no Reverence to me at all, or that thou would'ſt expreſs thy Reverence by a zealous Performance of my Commandments. For God will be *ſanctified in them that come near him*, and declares that he will not be *Mock'd*, and can more eaſily endure that his Grace ſhould not be known, than that it ſhould be deſpiſed. But *becauſe thou art lukewarm*, or hypocritical, pretending to inward Holineſs, when thou haſt only the Shell or Shadow of it; and *art neither hot nor cold*, not willing to throw off the *Form*, nor yet to riſe up to the *Power of Godlineſs*, *I will ſpue thee out of my Mouth:* which is an elegant Alluſion to the Nature and Quality of the Stomach, and thoſe Meats and Drinks that are receiv'd into it. What is either *hot*, or *cold*, is immediately felt, and provokes the Stomach

to receive with Greedineſs, and to retain; but that which is *lukewarm*, being very near of the ſame Degree of Heat with the natural Heat of the Stomach, is neither felt, nor perceiv'd, but remains there for ſome Time unconcocted and without working, and at laſt growing troubleſome and diſagreeable, is caſt out with loathing, like an unwelcome and unprofitable Gueſt. The *main* Drift then of this Similitude (for we are not to wreſt Similitudes beyond their *due Scope*) ſeems to be this; that if it relates to the Church *in general* that is grown thus *lukewarm* and unprofitable, then *Chriſt* here threatens that he will caſt it out of his Sight, or remove it into another Land, or give Orders concerning it, as the Huſbandman in the Parable did concerning the barren Fig-tree, after he had tried all Methods of Cultivation, and found that it produced nothing but Leaves, *cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?* Or if it reſpects only the *particular* Members of the Church, that have long continued in a State of Barreneſs, *Lukewarmneſs*, and Indifference, and *brought no Fruit to Perfection*; then this Threatening of our Saviour's plainly imports, that as Vomiting is generally ſudden and violent; ſo he will haſtily or unexpectedly *ſpue* theſe *out of his Mouth*, or cut them off by ſome ſudden or violent Death, or ſome ſad Diſaſter; God being often obſerv'd to bear longer with notoriouſly negligent Men,

than

than with thoſe that are hypocritical, unſound, or unſincere. And 'tis melancholy to obſerve how many ſad Inſtances there have been in this Nation of ſuch ſudden Exciſions within theſe few Years: And every Day preſents Us with freſh Inſtances enough to excite our Vigilance, to quicken our expiring Zeal, and make us ſhake off that Drowſineſs and Supineſs, which has ſo long poſſeſs'd and benumb'd our Souls.

The imaginary and real State of the Laodiceans.

V. 17. *Becauſe thou ſayſt, I am rich, and increaſed with Goods, and have need of nothing: And knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*——In order to form a right Notion of the *Laodicean State*, as here repreſented, it will be proper to look back, and take a ſhort View of the State of Religion, as it ſtood in the latter End or towards the Declenſion of the *Philadelphian Age*; which I ſhall give the Reader in the Words of a great Genius of our own Nation, that lived and wrote about that Time.—— "The State of *Religion* and the State of "*Learning* ſeem to ſtand at preſent like the "two Poles of the Earth, one *Elevated* and "the other *Depreſſed*." The Truth is (though it be a ſad one) Fineſs and Irreligion make the Character of this Age, which has no Heat with its Light, but while it ſhines bright and radiant, feels cold and frozen, and

and with all the gay Appearances of Life, has the Chillneſs of Death upon it. *Thou haſt a Name that thou liveſt, and art Dead.* *Rev.* iii. 1. Which plainly ſhews that the latter Days are come upon us, whereof there is this double Character, that *Knowledge* ſhall *increaſe*, but the *Love* of many ſhall *wax cold.*—— It muſt be allowed, that the preſent Age has Advantages of *Preaching* and *Writing*, far beyond what former Ages could boaſt of; and that Chriſtians now have Aſſiſtances almoſt as much beyond thoſe of the Primitive Chriſtians, as theirs were beyond thoſe of the *Heathen* World; and yet (which is both ſtrange and lamentable to conſider) they excelled Us as much in Goodneſs, as we do them in Learning and Knowledge, and were much better without theſe Advantages, than we are with them. No Learning like Modern Learning, no Reaſoning like Modern Reaſoning, and yet no Chriſtianity like Primitive Chriſtianity. Now indeed Chriſtianity is better underſtood, and better defended, and the Rules of it more rationally inforced, but then 'twas better practiced: Now we Diſcourſe better, but we Live worſe. What *ſhall* we, what *can* we ſay to theſe things? It is our great *Shame*, and it will be our *Condemnation.*"—— The Complaint of this Author, we ſee, is, that the Practice of Chriſtians in his Days was not anſwerable to their Profeſſion, and that

Men

Men did not live, as they reaſoned and believed: But had he been in our Days, he muſt have been ſadly ſenſible, that there is as little Faith as there is Works, that our Light is vaniſhed with the Heat, and that Chriſtians are now as deficient in Knowledge as they are in Practice; I mean in the only uſeful and ſaving Knowledge, *the Knowledge of God and of Themſelves.* Arts and Sciences, and all Kinds of Humane Literature flouriſh and increaſe; but Divine Knowledge, the Knowledge of Spiritual Things, the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, was never (ſince our Deliverance from the Darkneſs of Popery) leſs ſtudied, or leſs improved. In the midſt of all the *Mathematical*, *Philoſophical*, and *Philological* Learning that abounds in this Age, Men are extremely ignorant of their own State and Condition with reſpect to Grace and the Favour of God; and no Age or Nation perhaps, under the like great Advantages, ſtands more expoſed, than ours does, to that *Woe* and Vengeance denounced of God by his Prophet *to them who call Evil Good and Good Evil, that put Darkneſs for Light and Light for Darkneſs, that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.* And who will go about to open the Eyes of the Blind? who will undertake to convince thoſe, who *ſay they are rich, and increaſed with Goods, and have Need of Nothing*, that they are *wretched, and miſerable, and poor,*

and blind, and naked? 'Tis expreſsly fore-told *Dan.* xii. 10. that *none of the wicked ſhall underſtand*, viz. the great Truths contained in Prophecy; which 'tis very eaſy to ſuppoſe, conſidering that Men of light Tempers and irreligious Diſpoſitions, will and muſt, in their own Defence, explode and ridicule all ſuch Predictions. They have neither the *Capacity*, nor the *Inclination* to underſtand them. No wicked Perſon, while he continues ſuch, can be deſirous of *Chriſt*'s Second Coming, or wiſh that it were near at Hand, or that the preſent State of Things were ſoon to paſs away. Things ſo contrary to his Inclination, muſt be equally contrary to his Expectation and Belief. And as to the conceited, *lukewarm*, or Half-Chriſtian, whatever his Capacity or Inclination may be, 'tis certain that he will not be *at the Pains* to learn and underſtand theſe things, or to know his own true State, how *wretched, and blind, and naked* he is in the Sight of an All-ſeeing God. And yet 'tis not proper to lay aſide all Endeavours to awaken ſuch out of their fatal Slumber, and to turn them from Darkneſs to Light. No, the Means are to be continued, whatever the Event and Succeſs be, which is *God*'s Concern, not *our*'s. And to the diligent Uſe of theſe we are greatly encouraged by the Advice and Example of our Bleſſed Saviour in the following Verſes.

Chriſt's Counſel, or Exhortation to the Laodiceans.

V. 18. *I counſel thee to buy of me Gold tried in the Fire, that thou may'ſt be rich, and white Raiment, that thou may'ſt be cloath'd, and that the Shame of thy Nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine Eyes with Eye-Salve, that thou may'ſt ſee.* ——

As evil Habits are only to be overcome by contrary Habits; ſo this Counſel of our Saviour is here offered by way of Remedy, and ſuited to the threefold Malady of the *Laodiceans*, viz. their ſpiritual Poverty, Nakedneſs, and Blindneſs. 1. Their *Poverty* and Wretchedneſs is contracted by a Habit of Idleneſs, or by a Neglect of good Works: This Neglect is owing to want of Courage and Reſolution, to Self-Indulgence or a vicious Tenderneſs to the Fleſh, and to a Fear of Suffering or Dread of Perſecution: The natural Effects of which are baſe Compliances with the Iniquity of the Times, a cowardly Silence, and ſcandalous Indifference in Matters of Religion, and the Cauſe of Truth. Now our Saviour here adviſes Us to act the Reverſe of all this, *viz.* not to be aſhamed to confeſs him before Men, not to be afraid of them which can only kill the Body, to be willing to endure Hardneſs as good Soldiers of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to contend earneſtly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, to be zealouſly affected always in a good Thing, and to aſſert and vindicate the great Truths

of the Goſpel againſt all Oppoſition whatſoever, and even at the Hazard of all that is dear and valuable to Us in this World. This is to *buy* of him *Gold tried in the Fire*, whereby we may be *rich*, and without which (as the Times now are) we muſt be miſerably *poor*. 2. The *Nakedneſs* of the *Laodicenas* reſpects more particularly that grand Diviſion of Sin, *the Luſts of the Fleſh*, which will more than ordinarily abound in the latter Days. For though *all Sin* is fitly repreſented in Scripture by the Word *Nakedneſs*, as it robs the Soul of its Ornaments, Cloathing, and Defence: yet is this more peculiarly and more emphatically true of the Sins of *Intemperance* and *Impurity*, which not only diveſt the Soul of its proper Covering, but expoſe it to open Shame and Contempt. Our Saviour therefore, on the contrary, counſels the *Laodiceans* to buy of him *white Raiment that they may be cloath'd. The white Raiment is the Righteouſneſs of the Saints*, viz. Innocence and Purity, Repentance and Pardon. To *buy* theſe imports that we muſt be at ſome Pains and Expence to procure them; and the Reaſon given, *that the Shame of thy Nakedneſs do not appear*, implies, that the Contagion is general, and that few are ſo righteous, upright, and ſecure in this reſpect, as not to ſtand in need of Repentance and Vigilance; and therefore that thoſe who have not been ſo happy as

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to keep themſelves altogether pure and unſpotted from the World, ſhould take Care in Time to waſh away their Spots in the Waters of Contrition, and by a ſtricter and holier Converſation: That ſo whatſoever Defilements they may have contracted in the midſt of a miſerable and naughty World, through the Luſts of the Fleſh or the Wiles of Satan, being purged and done away, they may at laſt be preſented pure and without ſpot before God. 3. The *Blindneſs* of the *Laodiceans* is to be removed by *anointing their Eyes with Eye-Salve.* By this, I conceive, is meant the Holy Scripture or Word of God, which the Pſalmiſt calls *a Lamp unto his Feet, and a Light unto his Paths*; and is here very ſignificantly ſaid to be an *Eye-Salve*, as deſigned by God to cure and remove the Dimneſs of our Natural Reaſon, or of the Light of Nature; which he likewiſe foreſaw would, in this degenerate and dark Age, be advanced by the Blind and Ignorant even above the clear Light of Revelation; which is moſt ſhamefully perverted, and moſt ſcandalouſly ſlighted and neglected in theſe Days, though the only Thing that can make Men *wiſe unto Salvation.* The *Anointing* the Eyes with this *Eye-Salve* ſignifies a conſtant, diligent, and conſcientious ſearching and ſtudying the Scriptures, to the Purpoſes of an holy Faith and ſuitable Practice, which is ever attended with

with the Illumination of the Spirit, and able to make every Chriſtian perfect, to abound in all Wiſdom and ſpiritual Underſtanding, and thoroughly furniſhed unto all good Works. And without this, the Knowledge of all other things will ſignify nothing. How great then muſt be the Guilt and Folly of thoſe that deſpiſe or neglect theſe lively Oracles deliver'd to Us? But whether Men will hear them, or whether they will forbear the Words which *Chriſt* hath ſpoken unto them in his Goſpel, the ſame ſhall judge them at the laſt Day.

But this Reproof and ſeaſonable Advice is ſomewhat ſoften'd by aſſigning the Reaſon of its being given in the next Verſe.

V. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten.*——Though *Chriſt*'s Chaſtiſements as well as Rebukes are Tokens and Arguments of his tender Care and Affection; yet he ſeldom proceeds to the former, before he has tried the Succeſs of the latter. He therefore *firſt rebukes* thoſe whom he loves, that is (to interpret this paſſage with an Eye to the preſent State of Things, as 'tis but reaſonable) he endeavours to make them ſenſible of their Lazineſs, their Indifference, and Lukewarmneſs, and that their Works, when weighed in the Balance, will be found wanting. This he reproves them for, by the ſecret Whiſpers of his Spirit, by the Convictions of Conſcience, by the Reaſoning of their

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own Minds, by the Voice of his Meſſengers, by the various Occurences that paſs in the World, by the *Signs of the Times*, which are now ſo plain and viſible that he who runs may read them, by the remarkable Evidences of the near Approach of his Second Coming, and by his Exemplary Judgments upon Others, whereby he gives Warning to thoſe that eſcape: And if theſe and the like Methods prove inſufficient to rouze them from their deadly ſleep, he then proceeds to his *ſtrange Work*, to bring upon them Trouble, Affliction, and Perſecution; and by a Courſe of ſevere Diſcipline opens their Ears to Inſtruction, and imparts unto them the Spirit of Wiſdom, and thereby trains them up and prepares them by Degrees to be the Friends and Favourites of God. At firſt this Holy Spirit will walk with them by crooked Ways, and bring Fear and Dread upon them, and Torment them with her Diſcipline, until ſhe may truſt their Souls and try them by her Laws; then will ſhe return the ſtrait way to them, and ſhew them her Secrets. And I can't but think that this Paſſage bears a ſpecial Reference to that Prophecy in *Malachi*, which deſcribes our Saviour's Method of Proceeding with one particular Sort of Men in the latter Days.—— *He is like a Refiner's Fire, and like Fuller's Soap. And he ſhall ſit as a Refiner and Purifier of Silver: And he ſhall purify the Sons of Levi, and purge them*

them as Gold and Silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteouſneſs. And this is agreeable to what St. *Peter* obſerves, that *Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God.* And the Time ſeems to be now come for it,

Ibid. *Be zealous therefore and Repent.*—— Your *Zeal* is neceſſary both to teſtify the Sincerity of your Repentance, and to enable you to bring forth Fruits worthy of it: And you ought likewiſe to repent of your *Lukewarmneſs* hitherto, or of your former want of Zeal; which has been attended with fatal Conſequences. The great Enemy of Mankind, and particularly of this Church and Nation, who has his Time and Seaſon for every wicked Purpoſe, after he had for many Years together toſs'd and divided us by Faction and Parties, drove us at laſt upon the oppoſite Extreme, and lull'd us aſleep into a fatal Security and dangerous Peace. A general Stagnation of Zeal and Activity in the Cauſe of God and Religion has been but too viſible for ſome Time. This indeed may be call'd, in the new Way of Speaking, a Token of National Union and a Coalition of Parties; but 'tis a pernicious Union, and a wicked Coalition, more dangerous and deſtructive to the Souls of Men, than Wars and Deſolations; as a Lethargy is known to be of a more killing Nature than a high Fever. That which led the Way to this melancholy

melancholy State of Chriſtianity amongſt Us, has been the dextrous Uſe and Application of that fine ſpecious Word *Moderation*, which ſome had been ſo long ringing in our Ears, and have now found their Account in it. For by the Event it too plainly appears, that this is the moſt ſucceſsful Engine that was ever perhaps made uſe of by the Deſtroyer of Souls, to weaken and undermine the Conſtitution of our Church, to looſen the Reins of Diſcipline, to trample upon our Laws and Liturgy, to bring ſacred Things and Perſons into Contempt, and to ſtab Religion to the very Heart; and which, through the tame and treacherous Compliances of ſome, and the falſe Expedients of others, has brought Us to this low, languiſhing, and conſumptive Condition in which we are. For we may venture to affirm, that this *Moderation*, as taught and practiſed of late Years, has done more Miſchief to the Souls of Men, and to this Church of ours, than all the Perſecutions ſhe ever underwent, either in *Popiſh* Reigns, or in the Days of *Fanatick* Uſurpation. *Be zealous therefore and Repent.*

A ſpecial Promiſe and Encouragement to the attentive Laodiceans.

V. 20. *Behold, I ſtand at the Door and knock; if any Man hear my Voice and open the Door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me.*

It is here to be Noted that in the Epiſtles to the other Churches, there is mention only of Rebuke and Commendation, and ſometimes of both, and ſome Exhortation likewiſe is given to the Churches in *Thyatira* and *Sardis:* But to the Church in *Laodicea* the Exhortation, as before, is very expreſs and particular, and here likewiſe are the greateſt Motives to Repentance and Reformation; ſo that though this Church be not commended for any one Particular, yet there is Room left for the higheſt Commendation, and for the greateſt Reward, if the Invitation and Counſel our Saviour gives be duly followed: And becauſe it is not intimated whether any would follow this Counſel, or accept this Invitation, but the Matter is ſtill left in Suſpence (whereas in the worſt Church, that of *Sardis*, particular Notice is taken of thoſe that were *worthy*) I can't but ſuppoſe that the *Everlaſting Goſpel* was to go forth in this Age, and that the full Explication of theſe Epiſtles would be ſealed up, or reſerved till this Time. But now *Chriſt ſtands at the Door and knocks.* Now he calls for our *Zeal*, and requires our *Repentance.* Now he invites All to come unto him, and promiſes to accept them upon the Terms of true Contrition and Amendment, and will reject none but thoſe that think they are without Offence. Now he is ready to receive and entertain All that *open the Door*

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to him, and *hear his Voice.* It was an antient Cuſtom to knock and to call aloud at the ſame Time. In alluſion to this Cuſtom our Saviour here declares of himſelf that he both aſks and knocks for Admiſſion into the Heart of every Chriſtian; and that none may find Excuſe, he iſſues out his general Summons, and empowers and authorizes the Meaneſt of his Servants to *tell them that are bidden to come to the Marriage:* And if thoſe that are bidden ſhould refuſe to come in, he will employ more Honourable Harbingers or Meſſengers to *go out quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and to bring in the Poor, and the Maimed, and the Halt, and the Blind*; and becauſe there will ſtill be Room, other Servants will be ſent out likewiſe into the *High-ways and Hedges* to *compel them to come in, that his Houſe may be filled.* For *all things are now ready*; and this is the Laſt Call, and the Laſt Invitation they are to expect. And the Promiſe *Chriſt* gives to thoſe that will accept of the Invitation, *viz.* that he will *come in to them, and will ſup with them, and they with him*, plainly implies and preſignifies the more frequent Celebration of the *Lord's Supper*, whereby theſe new Converts or Penitents ſhall obtain a more abundant Conſolation, or that Grace ſhall chiefly be imparted to them by this Means; which may likewiſe intimate the grate Diſuſe or Diſcontinuance of the

Holy Euchariſt in theſe Days. This Promiſe then reſpects their ſpeedy Growth in Grace, and quicker Advancement in Holineſs, as the following does their Title (upon their Perſeverance) to a far more exceeding weight of Glory.

The general Promiſe.

V. 21. *To him that overcometh, will I grant to ſit with me in my Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his Throne.*—— To *overcome as Chriſt alſo overcame*, may be an Intimation that the *Laodicean State* will be almoſt as univerſally corrupt, as that wherein our Saviour lived and exerciſed his Miniſtry, and that whoever will be good in this State, muſt expect to meet with ſomething of the like general Oppoſition, Hatred, and Perſecution; that the Difficulties however of this Warfare (if attended with Victory) will entitle a Man to the higheſt Reward, of which there is no Parallel upon Earth, even to ſit upon the ſame Throne of Glory with our Saviour; which was never known to be the Caſe of any Subject with his Prince. This Promiſe is ſomewhat like that which *Chriſt* made to his Apoſtles.—— *Ye are they which have continued with me in my Temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my Table in my Kingdom, and ſit on Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael.*——

Iſrael. —— From which Words 'tis eaſy to obſerve, among other things, that thoſe who endure the greateſt Temptations ſhall have the greateſt Rewards, or that thoſe who have preſerv'd their Integrity in the moſt Trying Times ſhall be proportionably advanced in the Heavenly Kingdom: So that the Reward promiſed to the faithful or penitent *Laodiceans*, ſeems to be the Greateſt of all.

The Monitory Concluſion.

V. 22. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* —— Let him hear what he ſays to his own Conſcience, what he is now proclaiming to the World, what he ſpeaks by his Prophets, what he has revealed of former Times, and what he declares of the preſent. Let him conſider particularly, and mark well the fatal Progreſs of *Apoſtacy*, which began with the Firſt Church, and will be finiſhed in the Laſt. Let him recollect and remember that a *Defect* or Abatement of the *firſt Love* under a Ceſſation of Perſecution in the latter End of the *Epheſine* Church, opened the way to an Indulgence and *Toleration of Idolatrous Practices*, during the Sun-ſhine of the *Pergamean* State; that this was ſucceeded by an *Eſtabliſhment of Error and Hereſy* in the *Thyatirian* Age; and that this produced an *almoſt total Apoſtacy* in the *Sardian* State. And had

had not God miraculouſly interpoſed, and put a ſtop to the fatal Progreſs by the Church in *Philadelphia*, and open'd then a Door to the Revival of *Primitive Chriſtianity*, the World, long e're now, had filled up the Meaſure of its Iniquity, and muſt by this Time have come to an End. But That which was ſtopt for the two laſt Ages, is broken out with greater Violence in this; and as there is nothing left to ſtop its farther Progreſs (this being the Laſt of the Seven Churches) it muſt ſettle upon its Lees, and have its final and fatal Period in the Mire and Dregs of *Antichriſtianiſm*. For when Religion ſinks ſo low, or riſes no higher, than to a State of Indifference and *Lukewarmneſs*, it either aſſumes the Maſk of *Hypocriſy*, or ends in open Libertiniſm and *Profaneſs*. And when the World, the *Chriſtian* World is arrived to this Height, or rather *Depth of Apoſtacy*, then will that *Man of Sin* appear, the Sum total or Recapitulation of all Iniquity, the Perſonal *Antichriſt*, *whoſe Coming will be after the Working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders, and with all Deceivableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they receiv'd not the Love of Truth that they might be Saved.* For which moſt dreadful and moſt dangerous Trial, do Thou, O Bleſſed *Jeſu*, who haſt mercifully foretold and forewarned

warned Us of thoſe perillous Days, fit and prepare all thy faithful Servants: Even ſo, Lord *Jeſu*, *Amen*, *Amen!*

S. D. G.

POSTSCRIPT.

IT was intended, as was hinted in the Title-Page, to make here ſome brief Obſervations *concerning the Types and Forerunners of Antichriſt the Great*, and to offer ſome Reaſons that might incline Us to believe that *the Time of his Appearing cannot be very far off.* But, by Reaſon of great Incumbrances, and greater Infirmities, I am obliged to drop this Deſign for the preſent, and ſhould be glad to transfer it to ſome Able Hand that may treat this important Subject with a Judgment and Accuracy which it deſerves.

FINIS.

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